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THE MEMOIRS OF RAYMOND KANTOR:

SURVIVOR OF BUCHENWALD

EDITED BY

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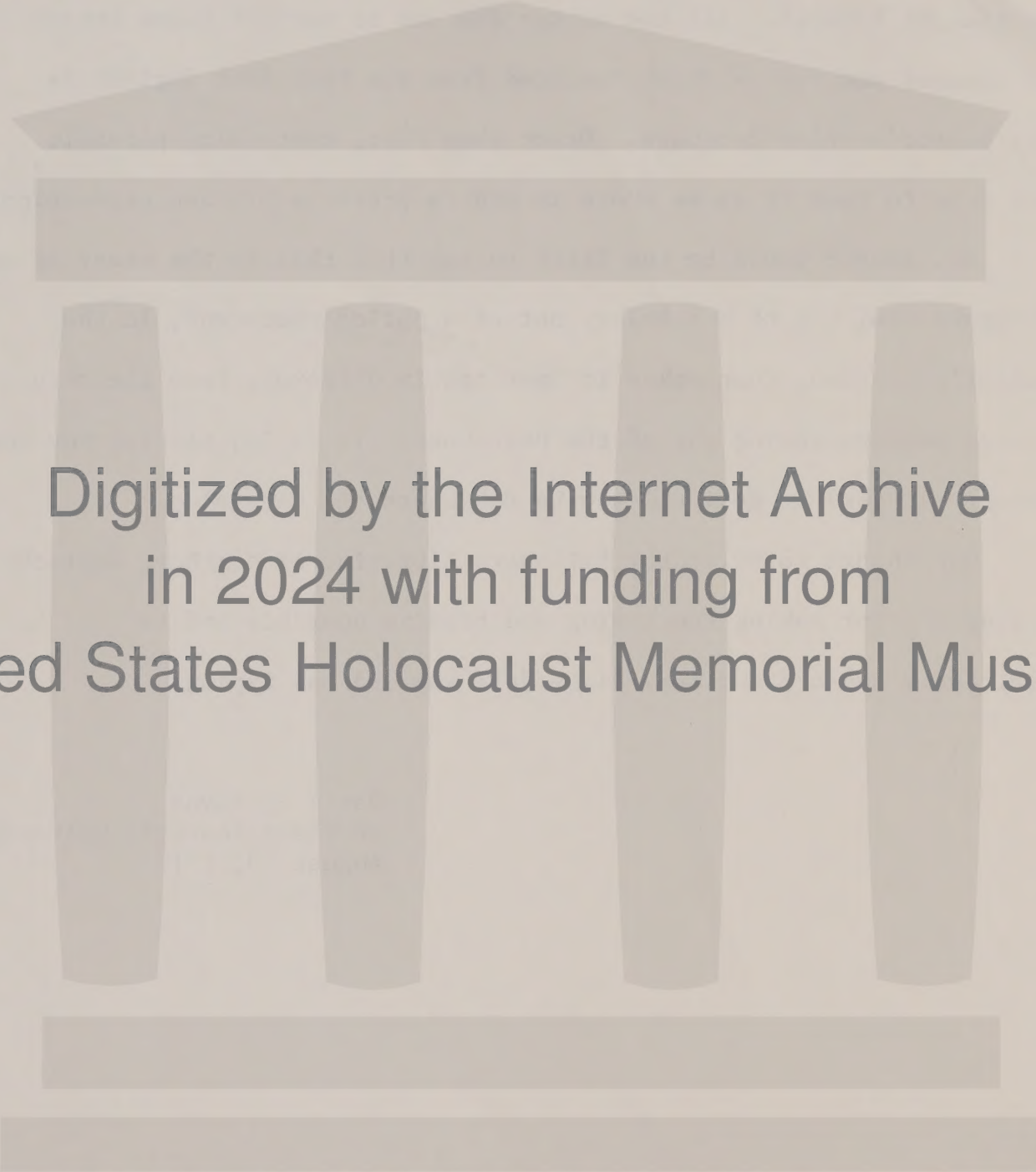
INTRODUCTION

This is the true story of what happened to Ray~~mond~~ Kantor, written by himself. All the editor did was to correct those errors of grammar and syntax which resulted from the fact that English is Mr. Kantor's third language. Other than that, everything possible was done to keep it as he wrote it and to preserve his own expression.

Mr. Kantor would be the first to say that this is the story of an ordinary man, not of a scholar, not of a philosopher, and, in the editor's opinion, that makes it importantly different from the more famous memoirs coming out of the Holocaust. It tells, simply, how one person survived in Hell and how he remembers the surviving.

Our thanks to Mr. Bobby Holloway, Librarian of Northern Kentucky University for making the typing and binding possible and to Mrs. Leila Rumford and Mrs. Diane Jelf who did the typing.

David S. Payne
Northern Kentucky University
August 23, 1979



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I

dedicate

this writing as a living memorial in honor of my dear

Parents

TOVYA AND CHAVA KANTOR

my brother

SCHLOMO

my sister

RYVKA

and all my relatives, who numbered in the hundreds,
who perished in the Nazi holocaust. May they all rest
in peace and be eternally remembered.

CHAPTER I

The Ghetto

The train was finally pulling away from the station, loaded with happy people on the last leg of their journey from Munich to Bremerhaven before leaving Germany on their departure for their new homeland, the United States. For most of the passengers, it was the culmination of many months of processing, physical examination, personal interviews, and fear of being refused admittance to the Golden Land of Freedom. Although there was to be final processing in Bremen, another delay and rejection was still possible. However, this thought was not on their minds now.

When I looked around my compartment, I saw happy faces mixed with sad. Had I had the nerve to ask, I probably would have been told that their thoughts were with their immediate past as were mine. For they were all survivors of the holocaust, miraculously escaped death when liberated by the Allied armies at the end of The Second World War. Almost all of them had lost all their families and possessions, and were here either by themselves or with families they had created since the end of the war four years ago. The scars of the holocaust were fully visible on their faces and were to stay there even into death. The majority came from "Displaced Persons" camps in the American Zone of Germany. There were also many who came from cities where they had lived since the end of the war. But it really made no difference, as they all quietly situated themselves, making the best of the seats available as if they were one big family.

It was getting dark when the train left Munich and it would not be until the next morning that the train arrived in Bremen. Some aboard were

simply relaxing while others were already napping. I was with my wife, whom I had married three years before, and my son, a little boy of two. The baby was sleeping in a corner and, since I did not feel well, the people in my compartment allowed me more room so I could stretch out somewhat. Shortly I fell asleep and in my dream found myself back home with my parents reliving my life once again.

It is Friday evening. My entire family is seated in their designated chairs around the table, because it is just about time for the Sabbath meal to begin. My father is at the head of the table. To his right is my mother and younger brother, and to the left sits my little sister and myself. I am twelve years old. I can see it is winter and it is very cold outside, a typical December frost in Czestochowa, Poland. Inside it is delightfully warm, a warmth that fills the heart and soul as well. There is a feeling in the house that all the worries and problems that are constant with the Jews, not withstanding personal problems, are suddenly nonexistent. The table is covered with a white tablecloth. In the middle of the table stand four candles on four big silver candleholders. In front of my father, on the table, are two covered egg breads called hallah, and a bottle of wine. My father finishes the blessing over the wine and is now making the blessing over the hallah. This over, my mother returns to the kitchen to serve the meal. The meal is very festive and is filled with singing and story telling by all of us. The meal is over, grace is said and everyone is doing his own thing. My father enjoys his tea and the reading of the press, mostly Jewish.

On the morning of the Sabbath, all the male members of the family attended the synagogue. It was seldom that one missed the Sabbath morning

prayers at the synagogue. If it happened, one was sick or attending a sick person. Synagogue was within walking distance of about ten minutes. In contrast to other houses of prayer, which were many in the Jewish neighborhood, this one was a relatively large building, the upper floors of which were used during the week as a school. The building was situated on the bank of the Warta river, which flowed through the city of Czestochowa, and enclosed all around with one-story small tenement housing and high walls on the other side., Between the building and the enclosure was a big empty lot, which served as a play ground area for the students during the breaks when classes were in session. I greatly enjoyed attendance at the synagogue and I believe that, next to home and school, it had a great impact on my life and molded me into the person that I am now. Synagogue was not only a place of prayer but a place where Jews together rejoiced on holidays and happy occasions, a place where they decried their fate and looked for refuge from their problems. But Saturday, usually before and during the breaks of the prayer, the week's political events in general and Jewish events in particular were discussed among the congregants. I know today that these discussions gave me my first political awareness and stimulated my interest in civic and political affairs.

At midday, after we returned from the synagogue, we again had a festive meal, accompanied by song and by prayer and discussion in which the whole family took part in. The afternoon was reserved for visiting our grandparents, relatives and friends. We usually accompanied our parents on these visits. When we grew older, however, we found our own interests. The visits also enabled us to get together with our cousins and with the

children of friends. While the grownups engaged in small talk the children had a good time playing.

After my twelfth birthday my Saturday afternoons were spent at the local Zionist organization. There I met many boys and girls with whom I enjoyed great friendships. We played together, discussed our personal goals and plans and the future of the Jewish people. Those were the days when Hitler was already in Power in Germany, and Poland was filled with antisemitism which showed itself with several pogroms in Przytik, Brzesc, and in my own city. Those were also the days when Britain announced its infamous white paper restricting Jewish immigration to Palestine. Those were critical days for our people but we had not grown despaired. We were determined to keep Palestine open for the Jews and to defend our people at all costs. Some of those early friends of mine have since given their lives in pursuit of these goals. On Saturday evenings the family again gathered around the table to hear father say a prayer over wine and candles, officially ending the Sabbath. Thus a new week began, hopefully a week of peace and tranquility.

Czestochowa, Poland, was a city of one hundred and ten thousand people. It was famous for its Catholic cloister which was built on the outskirts of the city several centuries ago, on a mountain called Jasna Gora. The place was holy to the Polish Catholics for it housed a big golden statue of the Holy Mother Madonna. During the summer, Catholic processions streamed in from all over the country to pray at this stie. It wa a beautiful city on the banks of the Warta river, surrounded by many parks. Although not large in area, it had one big boulevard cutting

across the heart of the city, and a variety of stores, cafes and restaurants. The middle part of the boulevard was a wide area arranged like a park with lawns and trees beautifully spaced and running the whole length of the boulevard. It served as a divider for the traffic running in opposite directions and a place to enjoy a nice walk. There were benches under the trees for those who needed rest for their tired bodies or sought to enjoy the shade during the summer months. This, of course, was not the only walking area on the boulevard. Each opposite side of the boulevard adjoining the buildings also had a large walking area. The city had a few small industries, mainly metallurgical. The climate was pleasant, warm summers and cold winters. The Jewish population numbered thirty thousand, who lived, with few exceptions, in one section of the city. This was true of most Polish cities, even of those where the Jews were predominant. This was necessary because of the prejudice, the hate, and the constant threat of physical attack. For this reason no Jew would venture outside the Jewish community after dark unnecessarily.

The majority of the Jews were poor and barely made a living. Most of them were artisans, craftsmen and shopkeepers. Although skilled in tailoring and shoemaking and other crafts, life was a day to day existence for most of them. Jewish shopkeepers had to contend with a constant ugly campaign against buying of Jewish goods from Jewish merchants. The boycott was sponsored by rightist groups and tolerated by the government. Several years before the war the boycott became even more intense. The antisemitic groups placed their men in front of the Jewish stores, carrying placards proclaiming the "evils" of buying from Jews. Jews could not work for the

Government nor for industry, even if the owner was Jewish. This, of course, was not official law, as the government claimed to be democratic. But hiring a Jewish employee meant a strike by the rest. Nevertheless, and despite all the restrictions and persecutions, there were some rich Jews in industry, commerce and business. Jews were prominent also in the professions. There were many Jewish doctors and lawyers.

This was possible because there was a public elementary school system which was compulsory. Jewish children attended these schools which were segregated and separate. High schools, however, were private and available only to those who could pay. The Jewish community in Czestochowa maintained its own high school recognized by the system. Here tuition was charged but exceptions were made for those who were talented but unable to pay! This was true of every city in Poland with a major Jewish population. There were government-funded high schools which did not, however, admit Jews. The Polish universities practiced "numerous clauses" or a quota for Jewish students, complete with segregated benches. Studies at these universities were frequently disrupted by violence against the Jewish students. Even so, Jews found ways to educate their young, frequently sending them to foreign universities. There were also many Jewish parochial schools so called Chederim that concentrated mainly on religious and Jewish education. The majority of Jewish children started their education at age four at religious school and continued after age seven, dividing the time between public and parochial school. Poland was famous for its many academies of Jewish learning. Great scholars came from these institutions who later put their mark on the history of the Jewish people.

KNIT.

The Jewish community in Czestochowa was close ~~in the city~~. Their function was to look after the needy and the sick. The Jewish hospital was the pride of the city, both in services and in achievements. The council's responsibility also included the chief rabbi and the main synagogue. The chief rabbi was more than just a religious leader. Often he had to preside in resolving the disputes and differences of the Jews who were brought before him. The Jewish community also maintained a Jewish old home, a clinic and other institutions such as those which cared for the orphans, the destitute, for the poor, the cemetary, etc.

The cultural standards were very high. A dozen dailies in Yiddish and in Polish were published by Jews. Several Jewish libraries were supported by different organizations, with books on every subject. To complete the scene there were Jewish theatrical groups that often visited the city to bring joy and pleasure, to educate and to warm the heart.

This then was the setting when I was a little boy. My father was a distributor of colonial goods such as coffee, tea, cocoa. We were considered neither rich nor middle class, which meant ample food, clothing and shelter but no luxuries. My mother was a housewife, concerned mainly with the raising and the welfare of the children, that is, when she was not sick and laid up, which was quite frequent. My mother had three sisters and five brothers, six of those relatives resided with their families in Czestochowa. My grandfather and grandmother on my mother's side died when I was three and seven years old, respectively. My father had two brothers, both living in Warsaw. My father's parents were living in Czestochowa.

At the age of four I started religion, school which I attended six

days a week until I was seven, when I was also enrolled in public school. Thus I attended religious school in the morning and public school in the afternoon. In view of the hostility towards Jews visible everywhere, learning of the background and history of my people was of special significance to me. Very early in my childhood I became proud of being a Jew and this feeling intensified in me as I grew older. I suppose I was able to withstand the horrible years that were to follow because of this feeling. At the age of fourteen I graduated from public school and I enrolled in a private Jewish high school. Two years later my studies ended with the outbreak of Second World War. The school years, my formative years, I especially remember well. The teachers, the students, the friends that I made, especially one named Ishak Gutenberg, whom I befriended early in grade school, was my pal until he was killed during the war in the Ghetto. I was a fairly good student and enjoyed school immensely, especially so in high school, where I was class treasurer, secretary, and president. I was a member of the debating team, choir, and theatrical group. The end of the last school year before the war, was highlighted by a performance of the student body featuring everything the school offered. It so happened that my part was the Hebrew which was very pleasing to my parents. My brother, who was a year removed from me, and my sister who was six years younger, were more or less following the same path. We were a close-knit family as were most Jewish families. The family was together most of the time. I seldom remember a meal, including breakfast, without everybody present. We discussed personal problems which seemed more easily solved thereafter. Evenings I spent with my friend Ishak doing homework or playing. Quite

often I watched him helping his father who was a harness maker.

The Jewish section of Czestochowa consisted of a number of streets with densely populated tenement housing, and including several wide market places. Market was Tuesday and Friday at which time farmers brought their produce to the city and bought what they needed to take back to the villages surrounding Czestochowa. The relationship between Jew and Gentile was strictly business, reserved and suspicious. There were though, many great individual friendships among the Jews and Gentiles. At best, however, and in spite of many generations of living and fighting for a free Poland, Jews were made to feel no more than second class citizens.

In June, 1939, at the end of the school year, when I parted from teachers and friends for the summer vacation, I little realized that this would be my last year in high school and the end of my formal education. A Jewish high school in Czestochowa would not reopen under the the Nazis. Usually, I spent my summers twelve kilometers outside the city in a village named Ostrowy. My parents usually rented a cottage there for the summer where mother and the children stayed. Father used to come out on the weekends. I enjoyed these summer vacations for we spent most of our time out in the open. There were huge forests where we picked mushrooms and black berries. We played all kinds of games and met new friends. For some reason that had nothing to do with the world situation, my parents decided to stay in the city that summer. My brother had already quit school and was working for a tailor. I was helping father and my little sister was home with mother. The summer was a hot one politically. Austria and Czeschoslovakia had already become part of a greater Germany as had the

Lithuanian city and port of Memel on the Baltic. Hitler, with his designs on Poland, was threatening war unless the Polish government surrendered the port city on the Baltic called Danzig and a corridor through Poland thereto. The Polish government made it unmistakably clear that it would not follow Austria and Czechoslovakia and surrender. She promised to defend herself and to invoke her treaty with France and England. Because of the bitter lesson learned in Munich and the sacrifice of Czechoslovakia, France and England approved Poland's stand and promised military intervention in case of attack. Ironically, only a year earlier Poland had joined Germany in the spoils by annexing a small part of Czechoslovakia called Zaolzie. In spite of the war fever prevailing in the summer of 1939 there was still the hope that Poland together with France and England would be able to call Hitler's bluff. But then the news broke that Germany and Soviet Russia signed a non-aggression pact that made the war inevitable.

The morning of September 1, 1939, when Hitler attacked and officially declared war on Poland was no different than any other morning in the city of Czestochowa except for occasional reconnaissance planes and bursts of ground fire from the Polish artillery. The Polish radio was constantly interrupting the regular program to give coded messages, and, as the day progressed, that was all you would hear. The Polish president, Ignacy Moscicki, issued a proclamation in which he said that the eternal enemy of Poland had attacked again and spelled out the righteousness of Poland's cause. He vowed that the Polish people would defend the country and that ultimate victory was with Poland. Rumors were abundant that the Polish

army had invaded East Prussia and that England and France had declared war on Germany and dispatched armies and planes to help Poland.

The truth, however, was a different story altogether. The Polish air force, which existed mostly on paper and never was a match for the German air force, lay in ruins on the few airfields in the country. Whether by design or accident most of the planes were dismantled, so the story goes, for a thorough check. In the early hours of September 1, the German air force devastated all Polish airfields and the planes did not even have a chance to get airborne. The same was true on the battlefield. The Polish soldier gave a good account of himself. He fought fiercely and courageously. But the odds were against him. In most cases he never encountered his enemy. He had no air cover and fought against a modern mechanical army, mainly on foot with World War I weapons. His leadership deserted, plagued by treachery and spies. Thus the Germans advanced with lightning speed on all fronts. In a way it can be said that Poland was paying the price for its preoccupation with means to persecute and harrass the Jews rather than worrying about the defense of the country.

September 1, 1939 was a Friday. The sun was shining very pleasantly. Those remembering World War I and the scarcities of everything that followed, especially of food, flocked to the stores to buy up everything possible. People were digging trenches and basements were being made ready for shelter in case of air attack, and for plain hiding. As the day passed into the late afternoon, the feeling in the air was one of chaos and panic. The few defense posts visible on roofs against air attack were deserted. The police were nowhere in sight and the city government in flight for its safety. The German planes, by now were flying in formation very low over the city, undisturbed by anybody. Although the city itself was not being bombed by these Stukas,

as they were called, nobody had any doubts of their mission. Besides bombing military concentrations and installations, they were spreading destruction and death in the countryside on the roads which were congested with fleeing people. By late evening, and all during the night and the following day, Saturday, it looked as if everyone was leaving the city. The stories of the atrocities committed by the Germans in occupied areas, as told by the people fleeing eastward, contributed to the panic. The main thoroughfares of the city by this time were totally impassable. The irony of it all was that the people fleeing did not realize that on the roads they were becoming more perfect targets for the murderous Stukas. This scene was later to repeat itself in every country Hitler struck.

Saturday night our family did not sleep in the apartment. Instead, the basement of the building we lived in, which was ^{PREPARED EARLIER} ~~usually~~ used for sitting, sleeping etc., was occupied by all those tenants in the building who wanted to nap, or just rest. The building had about twelve tenants with families. The basement ordinarily was used for storage of coal, potatoes, and plain junk that the tenants did not use but nevertheless hated to part with. It was unfurnished and without electricity or heat. It had a dirt floor, was without windows and, therefore, very little ventilation and very damp. I doubt if the place had twenty-five square feet. It was by no means suitable to accomodate twelve families with small children among them. So far, however, the place was being used sparingly, and in shifts.

That Saturday night I was very tired from not sleeping the night before. I fell asleep sitting in the shelter and napped a few hours. Sunday morning my friend Ishak Gutenberg came over and invited me for a stroll over the city.

As we got out from the shelter I felt sleepy and cool, I thought about going to our apartment and getting some sleep in my bed, but the desire to know what was going on was much stronger and we took a walk towards the main boulevard of the city. It was a beautiful morning. The sun was just beginning to break through. When we reached the main boulevard, called the Aleje, it was completely deserted. We went down toward the bridge overlooking the railways leading from the main terminal. Not far away, we found the four corners of the bridge manned by German antiaircraft. Being young, and not realizing the danger, we stopped and chatted for a few seconds with the soldiers then we turned around and quickly returned to the shelter. There we told the people of our discovery. My parents lectured me for unnecessarily endangering my life and ordered me to stay with them. It was apparent now that within hours the city would be occupied by the Germans. What happened next, lay heavily on the minds of all.

Sunday, September 3, at about eleven o'clock in the morning, the deserted streets of Czestochowa became a beehive of activity. The German forces entered the city from all sides and physically occupied practically every inch of it. In contrast to the Polish Army they came completely mechanized, equipped with the most sophisticated weapons, unknown to most of us who dared to look. They displayed an organizational discipline that was most stunning. Each soldier seemed to know his place. Within minutes the city was in the grasp of the Germans. Slowly but surely the people started to come out of the shelters and watch the Germans. Some of the more brave of us even engaged the soldiers who were on the street in a friendly chat. All they had to say was that Poland was finished, that the Jews were the ones responsible for everything and that they would pay dearly. The Wauszawaka, which was the main road leading to Warsaw, for the next twenty-four hours reverberated

with constant noise of moving tanks, trucks, all kinds of vehicles, heavy artillery, horses and marching soldiers. The road which had been improved only a few years before the war (by replacing the cobblestones with asphalt) was used more in those twenty-four hours than in all the years since its completion. For the rest of the day Sunday people seemed to move unhindered about the city except where they might interfere with the orderly movement of the Germans. An early curfew was imposed, but other than this, it seemed that after about eighteen hours of German occupation that the city had been spared the horrors of war. Sunday night, the first night under the Germans, we spent again in the shelter as a safety measure, hoping in vain that somehow Poland would get some help from the Allies. It never came. But the following day, Monday, the Germans let loose on us, gave us a taste of their reign. That day is now known as "Bloody Monday."

Monday, September 4, 1939, the Germans were in full control of the city. In the morning hours the Jewish population came out into the streets only when it was necessary. Only a few, those driven by curiosity to note the changes that were taking place, remained in the streets without special need. There were no special incidents that morning that Jews were not used to under the Polish administration. As a rule we were subject to daily harassment and occasional beating and that continued unabated except that the Germans were the masters now. An early curfew was clamped down that was to continue, at least for the Jews, until the end. In spite of the quietness there was an ominous feeling among us that something really bad was about to happen to us.

Sure enough, about eleven o'clock a.m., we heard some shooting and saw squadrons of German planes over the city. We went all into the basement for shelter until the shooting was over. But the shooting continued unabated for the rest of the day. Later, someone came in from the outside with the infor-

mation that the Gestapo had arrived in the city and was shooting at the houses. Together with the Wehrmacht they were expelling all males from the houses and assembling them in different points in the city such as churches, factories and big open spaces. Those found in the street were being shot on sight. It was already very late in the afternoon and we were so scared that we did not dare even whisper to one another. The silence in the basement was such that one could drop a pin and hear it. This deadly silence was broken by the Germans breaking into the building and then into the apartments, looking for people and screaming in German that all males must come out or be shot if found later. While this was going on we practically stopped breathing and held on to one another. After breaking open every door and searching through the building and not finding anybody, and not realizing that we were all in the basement, the soldiers left. A discussion then ensued over the advisability of the males remaining in the shelter. After some haggling, crying and exchange of views, the males in the shelter decided not to endanger the women and children, to get out of the shelter and surrender. It was already late at night when my father, brother and myself kissed my mother and sister goodbye and all the men filed out one by one from the shelter with their hands up.

We ascended the stairs of the basement, passed a wide hall leading to the stairs of the building, and found ourselves outside of the gate. It was pitched dark and, if it had not been for our ignorance, we would have never come out. For the sight I saw is unforgettable. The area was lit up by fire and filled with shootings and explosions. We were immediately stopped by German soldiers in full battle dress with their rifles drawn. They searched us and ordered our hands and arms over our heads. They led us down Warszawska Street

towards Plac Daszywskiego which was a large square where an old Catholic church was situated. The square was filled with the numerous trenches that had been dug as a precaution when the war became imminent. The trenches were filled with soldiers manning machine guns or with bodies of recent victims. The place looked like the aftermath of a battleground. We were stopped in front of the church and searched again by soldiers who came out of the trenches and jumped us as if we were the best and most important of the Polish Army. Actually we were about twenty males ranging in age from forty-five to sixteen. I was at that time about sixteen years old, and I must admit that, in spite of my great fear and having read about atrocities of World War I, I did not fully comprehend this brush with death.

Luckily, after a few minutes of discussion among the officers, we were ordered inside the church which was already filled beyond capacity. Inside, the church no longer resembled a house of worship. The altar was bloodied and so was the ground. We were told by others that there had been some shootings inside before we came in. The ground was terribly wet and the stench would have been impossible to bear under normal circumstances. Apparently, people were meeting their sanitary needs on the spot. As a Jew, however, there was one consolation to me. For here at last there were not only Jews but Gentile Poles too. They were insulted, degraded, beaten and bullied just like we were. It was very hot and Poles did not mind begging a Jew for a little water. We spent the rest of the night praying and hoping that the church wouldn't be blown up. At daybreak the Germans, at the begging and pleading of the people, brought in a few buckets of water but rather than distribute it they sprayed us with it making us more miserable. By this time the shooting had died down. We felt relieved but were wondering what the Germans had in store for us next.

It was Tuesday morning already. The sun was shining through the tall gothic windows of the church and the September morning weather was pleasant. At about eleven o'clock the Germans ordered all boys up to age sixteen and old men to come forward, whereupon we were released and ordered to go home. All the others were subsequently cleared out of the church and marched under heavy guard to the quarters previously occupied by the Polish army on the outskirts of the city. Together with my brother, I ran home to be with my mother and sister. Our reunion was happy, and tearful, but at the same time full of concern over the fate of our father. It would take another day for most of the people to be released and for our father to be reunited with us. I later learned that the "Bloody Monday" in Czestochowa, which cost the city four hundred killed and many wounded, half of them Jews, was standard procedure in every city or locality that the Germans occupied. It was not a response to shooting by Jews and Poles at the German army (as claimed by the Germans) but rather to serve as a bloody warning that even slight opposition or the thought of it would be dealt with severely. Besides the killings there were many other atrocities committed on the population of the city. Many were tortured to death like one Joshua Cimes, the city's Jewish clown, bitten to death by German shepherd dogs, to the delight and laughter of German soldiers watching the spectacle. The message thus came through loud and clear. The inhabitants of the city will never forget the happenings of the day and the day will be recorded in pages of history as the "Bloody Monday" in Czestochowa.

In the days closely following the "Bloody Monday" a civilian city government was set up by the Germans under the chairmanship of a temporary city president. His name was H. Belke, a Czestochowa man, of German background,

otherwise known as a "Volkdeutsch." He was a traitor to his country and tried to excel his masters in his arrogance and brutality toward the Jews. There came a constant stream of anti-Jewish laws beginning with the stripping of all civil rights from the Jewish population. All bank accounts of Jews were blocked and possession of no more than one hundred zlotys was permitted. All valuables, diamonds and gold was to be surrendered. All schools of instruction and learning for us were closed. All Jewish newspapers or periodicals were prohibited. All radios and communication equipment of any nature was confiscated. Non compliance was punishable by death and torture. The Gestapo, SS, the Stadthauptmann, Wendler who was issuing the decrees, and the German Gendarmerie or military police supported by the newly re-activated Polish police and spies, reigned supreme. Any German could stop a Jew in the street or come into his house, search him, take his possession and shoot him and no accounting of any kind was necessary. From the advent of the occupation till the end of the war there was open season on Jews.

If the Germans originally had some difficulty in recognizing the Jews they found ready helpers in most Poles. On Tuesday following the bloody massacre, even as the blood of Jew and Pole alike was still everywhere and practically warm, Polish mobs guided the Germans to Jewish stores, broke them open and carried the goods away. Another practice the Germans engaged in right from the beginning was the game of taking Jews off the street and out of their houses for forced labor. In the early days the work was in most instances totally unnecessary and served strictly as means of harrassment and degradation and torture. For this purpose they looked specifically for older Jews with beards, dressed in Chassidic garb, or young boys.

I remember the first Rosh Hashana under the Germans, which fell in September.

About midday a German soldier walked into our building with his fixed bayonet looking for men. He ordered me, along with others in the building, into the street to join a group of Jews under guard. We were marched through the streets down the Aleje like criminals, to the jeers of passing Poles, who tried to outdo the Germans, until we came to the Church on Plase Magestrata across from City Hall. There the Gestapo and the SS in the black uniforms were waiting for us. The church was big and sitting in the middle of a big area and fenced around. The trenches in the yard were still open and there were a great many stacks of bricks and lumber. Apparently there must have been some building going on interrupted by the war. As we were walked into the yard the Gestapo fell on us screaming "war criminals, parasites, your end is at hand". They especially went after our elders with beards, and tore their hair out. After this bloody welcome they ordered us to carry the bricks and lumber, running from one place to another, again to the jeers and delight of some Poles who could not resist the temptation of watching this spectacle. The older people broke quickly under the strain of stick beating, running with heavy loads, and just plain torture. For instance, as we were running, the Gestapo men with their canes tripped some of us thus making us fall and bruising ourselves. Luckily, after a couple hours of this sadism, all of us bruised physically and mentally, many to the point that they had to be carried, they allowed us to go home.

Under these circumstances and conditions we had to try to perservere and survive. We had to learn to be flexible, to be able to cushion the blows that were yet to come. With each family, as with each individual, the supreme desire and even a religious law, was to survive at any cost. Of course, at this stage, even the most pessimistic among us did not believe that what was to follow would be mass extermination. Food became scarce from the very first day of the war,

and since we Jews were robbed of the legal right of earning a living, our situation was indeed precarious and outright dangerous. We nevertheless managed to derive some living from accumulated hidden resources, others continuing business illegally with the Poles, by selling and exchanging goods manufactured by us, thus giving employment to those able to produce the goods. Still others were helped by those more fortunate and by the Jewish community as such. Our family, like any other Jewish family, tried to make the best of the situation. The first order of business was to provide a livelihood as best as possible, then to keep ourselves alert to dangers in order to avoid them where ever possible and then hope for the best. To this end my father had hidden all our money and valuables in our apartment so that they would not be easily found. When the war broke out he had a stock of colonial goods like tea, cocoa, coffee, etc., which he removed from the regular place and hid in different places, hoping that if discovered by the Germans, who, incidentally made frequent searches, they would not bother with smaller quantities. I remember one time my father sold a friend a package of cocoa, and, as the man went into the street, he was searched by a military policeman. Luckily, when the policeman came to the apartment and did not find anything, he accepted the explanation that it was a gift from my father to his friend. It was a close brush with disaster and it created a great deal of anxiety for the family. At this time my brother and I were helping father, and, for the most part, keeping watch over our father so that no harm came to him. Although our standard of living declined, thanks to these tactics we knew no hunger till the latter part of the war.

During the final months of 1939, Czestochowa became completely overwhelmed and engulfed in the throes of the Germans. The occupation was so complete in every detail that the thought that the Germans would ever relinquish their hold

here was non-existent. The fact that Poland was captured in one week's time and Warsaw, the capital, surrounded, its fate sealed, holding out at great human cost and suffering just to prove the bravery of the Polish people, only added to the frustration. The people began to resign themselves to a hard, long, winter and long German reign. That the Soviet Union stabbed Poland in the back and occupied the western half of the country in a conspiracy with Hitler also added to the sense of frustration and finality. The inhabitants of the city in general were in for hard times and we Jews in particular.

In the early days of the war, some of my younger relatives and friends left the city to go to the territories annexed by Russia, hoping to avoid Nazi persecution and to survive the war. Some who finally made it to the other side learned with great disappointment that the red oppression was not a great deal better than the Nazi oppression. There were some who were so lonesome and homesick that they returned home, only to be killed later.

Before the end of the Succoth holidays, which was in October, the Gestapo called in Mr. Leon Kipinskey, a pre-war member of the Jewish community council, and ordered him to form a "Judenrat", a Jewish council of twenty-four members, under his chairmanship. After much reluctance, enough Jews agreed to join him. Thus the Judenrat came into being which would employ a number of Jews to administer every facet of Jewish life in the city, responsible with their lives to the Gestapo. The Judenrat, subsequently, was forced to execute the anti-Jewish decrees such as the surrender of gold, and to carry on the general oppression of our people. On December 15, 1939 the decree that Jews must display, on the left arm, the white and blue star of David became effective. Thereafter, Jews caught outside their homes without the armband were subject to the penalty of death. Jews were also forbidden to ride the trains or to use any communication systems.

On December 24th, the Gestapo instigated the Poles, just for the fun of it, to break into Jewish homes to rob and steal. Many of the houses were demolished, windows were broken, and anything that could be carried was taken away. In the evening, a fire broke out in the new Synagogue. The Synagogue was a beautiful structure built in the beginning of the twentieth century. The structure was tall with a square dome, from which the star of David reigned majestically over the whole city. The Jews tried to save the Synagogue, but the approaches to it were blocked by the Wehrmacht. So the Synagogue, with a great number of Torahs or Holy Scrolls, and a rich library of Judaics, went up with the smoke.

The New Year of 1940 saw the repression of the Jewish population continue. All Jewish businesses, industries, factories and property, were confiscated and turned over to German-appointed managers. In all cases, these were Poles of German extraction or former Polish employees of the establishment. The Jewish owner was forced to remain working, and, in most instances, only to suffer indignities from the newly appointed bosses. There was a constant search for gold and valuables in Jewish houses. Men were not safe in the streets for they might be snatched away for forced labor. In March of 1940, an official decree ordered all male Jews and Christians of Jewish extraction born between 1914-1923 to register at the Judenrat for forced labor. In the offices of the Judenrat which was located at Nine Aleje a forced labor division was set up. The Jewish Council hoped thus to alleviate the blows on the people by filling the contingencies of labor in an organized manner. We also hoped that the supply of labor everyday would bring to an end the random seizing of Jews for labor.

All this, however, was nothing more than wishful thinking. The harrassment in the streets continued in spite of the daily deliverance of thousands of Jews for forced labor. With each day more and more Jews were embraced by hunger and

poverty. At this stage the social welfare arm of the Jewish Council was providing ten thousand free soups a day. The Judenrat was also forced to care for thousands of Jewish refugees who had either escaped or had been forced from Lodiz, Krakow, and other cities. Whole families were quartered in houses of worship and public places under the most terrible conditions. The Jewish population grew from thirty thousand to forty-five thousand, a setting ripe for disease and epidemics had it not been for the Jewish mutual help. The Jewish Council created a Jewish board of health, ration cards, courts and police. The Judenrat, or the Jewish Council, was truly trying to cushion the harsh blows of the Nazis by compliance only with the minimum, hoping to save the majority.

With time, the demands by the Germans for larger contingencies of men for forced labor increased. Besides demanding the same people regularly for the same job, they required the Judenrat to have people available at different times. This forced the Jewish Council to have people available on a regular basis, both for the jobs that required the same men and for the random calls. The Jewish Council created a special, paid labor force, which answered these calls.

Until now, demands for men were made for local labor only. In August of 1940, came the first call for several hundred young men for shipment to an unknown destination to a forced labor camp. As this was the first such requirement, and because the Judenrat promised that all would be returned after three months at the most, most of the drafted men complied, despite their apprehension. Soon after departure, however, came news that was shocking. The journey had been made in sealed box cars, for days, without food and water. The destination had been a labor camp in Belzyc, in the eastern part of Poland. The bad news of hard labor under a starvation diet mixed with physical and mental oppression by the SS made the whole Jewish community in general, and the Judenrat in particular fear for the lives of the young men in the camp. The Jewish people sank even deeper into depression. There seemed to be no end to the suffering. Little did

I know then that, in only a month or so, I and my brother would be the victims of another such call and that we would be shipped out to another, similar camp in the East.

When the decree about forced labor for Jews first came out, and every male had to register with the Judenrat, we too had complied. Thus, my father, myself, and my brother became subject to call. However, in order to give our lives some normalcy, we tried to locate ourselves in certain jobs that would, we hoped, give us some protection from constant harrassment, and enable us to stay home. For instance, as the Judenrat was being formed, they needed people to man the different office departments. Through some of my school friends, who were enlisted to work at the Judenrat at its formation, I was offered a clerk's job in the Forced Labor Division, which I gladly accepted. My job was to compile lists of laborers of different groups and keep records of these groups. Since there were very few typewriters, I did my work long hand, which was time-consuming and very unproductive. This suited me very well for I was not interested in helping the enemy. I received no pay for this except for ration cards for a slice of bread and a soup from the community kitchen. My father was fortunate in getting a so-called "Wichtiger Jude" or "important Jew" identity card, which, for the time being, this status freed him from forced labor. There were a limited number of Jews who held this status for certain periods of time, renewable upon expiration at the pleasure of the Germans who headed industries and were responsible for materials and supplies considered vital for the war effort. It was the job of these Jews, who supposedly were expert in the particular fields, to look for and buy up these supplies. The German officials did not overlook the chance of personal profit and issued a number of these cards strictly for money. The purchasers were thus shielded without doing any work. My father received his identity card of "important Jew" this way. Later on when

the closed ghetto was established, he was able, thanks to this card, to move outside the ghetto, to keep in touch with his pre-war customers, and to help in our livelihood.

My brother was assigned to work on the railroad. This achieved, we hoped that our life was not going to be altered greatly and that we would remain together as a family. When the first order came for men for labor in the east, our assumption was that our family could not be touched because of our labor status, proved correct, at least for the time being, and lulled us into a confidence that soon was shattered. Only two months after the first call came, the Judenrat was confronted with another order for young men for another camp in the east. By this time the news of unkept promises were known to everybody. Cries of harsh treatment, hard labor, hunger and cold were reaching the families of these affected. The result was that half of the conscripts did not report. The urging and pleas of the Judenrat did not help. The Germans, faced with the possibility of not being able to meet the deadline for departure of the group, surrounded the offices of the Judenrat, cleared all the young men from there and some more from the streets of the Jewish Section.

I remember it was on a Friday about 4 P.M. I was getting ready to go home when the Gendarmes came into the office and ordered me and others to follow them downstairs, where a group of men under heavy guard was already waiting. They marched us through the Aleje and Polsudskiego streets to the city depot. There we were joined by others who had been called up and who had reported voluntarily, and still others who had been caught in the street. To my disappointment I noticed my brother, who had been caught in the street. There was also my cousin, who had reported and, therefore, came prepared with blankets and clothing.

So ended our hope of remaining together as a family. I went over to my brother and cousin, we embraced, kissed, and thereafter stuck together until we returned home three months later. My brother told me how he had fallen prey when returning home from work on the railroad. We wondered how we could get warm clothes to sustain us over the approaching cold months. It was getting dark. We were given some water and then led to the boxcars waiting for us on another track. The soldiers, with fixed bayonets, pressed us into the boxcars tightly. Inside, we situated ourselves as best we could, one on top of the other, with very little elbow space. Outside guards who were to accompany us took their places in elevated compartments attached to the box cars. God forbid, one of us deadly criminals might escape. We were not to leave for a few hours yet. It was night and it was getting cooler. Even so, we were warm, being pressed together like sardines.

My thoughts were with my mother and father. It was time now to usher in the traditional Sabbath, as this was Friday evening. Instead, I felt my parents were out trying to reach us. Surely enough, it was not long after, that parcels and packages of clothing and food began to arrive. When they called the names of the recipients I just knew that our parents would move mountains to alleviate our plight. When our packages were thrown into the box car and finally got to us, we found clothing and enough food to take care of a few more people besides ourselves. I could see that the Sabbath food prepared for the whole family as well as food that usually had to last for a few days, had been sent to us. It was quite a sacrifice by my parents, for food was expensive and hard to come by. This sacrifice meant many days of hunger for my parents and sisters. When we opened the package and saw a big halibut, I could not hold back my tears.

It was past midnight when the guards finished their final checks of the boxcars and reassured themselves that all the openings and moving doors were securely locked. We heard the officer in charge giving the order for the train to move. Inside, we were getting colder and all was very quiet. The conversations that had been going on before the train started to move stopped, and those who did not sleep had their senses trained to listen, and, if possible, even to smell the direction in which we were going. The clickaty-clack of the wheels of the cars on the track and the occasional whistle of the locomotive or a whisper by one of us were the only things breaking the silence of the night. I was thinking now of my warm bed at home and although I had spent nights before in basement shelters and other places in abnormal conditions, this was the first time I had been without my father. I could picture my parents still up, worrying about us and being comforted by relatives and neighbors. The train was already a good distance out of the terminal but nobody would speculate as to our destination.

We knew that we were moving eastward and that was all we knew. The rest of the night was uneventful except for the train's stopping and the locomotive's being switched. Our inquiries and outcries to the outside were either unanswered or met with insults. The train was moving very slowly. Inside our boxcar nothing changed. We were all huddled together as if one piece. I wondered how much longer it would be to our destination. The night slowly but surely began to give way to daybreak and the morning light tried desperately to break through any little opening in the boxcar. The autumn sun came through the clouds and tenderly warmed our boxcar. But it was too much for us for besides the heat of our bodies we now had to contend with our physical refuse. The odor was unbearable. The train kept slowly moving and so did the time. We were approaching noontime and still no water or food had been given to us. We were convinced that they were not going to kill us now, so we felt that our destination must

be near otherwise there would have been at least water for us. By now we knew that we were on the road to Lublin. We were getting so miserable that we were ready for anything if we could only be freed from this moving hell.

In the early afternoon we finally moved into the Lublin station. I had never been to Lublin before. I knew however, that Lublin was a city with a large Jewish population, a city famous for Jewish learning. There were many academies of Judaic studies. One that comes easily to mind is Yeshivet Chachmot Lublin, which had world renown. What happened to these Jews and their institutions was my thought now. And whether we were going to disembark here or only stop for a while. After some waiting, we heard the guards unlocking the seals and soon thereafter the doors sprung open. The sight we saw was frightening. Hundreds of Gestapo men in their black uniforms armed to the teeth, accompanied by big German sheperd dogs. With them were many more Ukrainian soldiers, who already had gained the reputation and become famous for their exceptional cruelty toward the Jews. They moved into the boxcars and at us like beasts for their victims. They screamed and shoved us out of the cars as one would shovel out potatoes. As the train was not on a regular track for passengers, but rather a backside track used probably for incidental purposes, elevated about eight feet from the ground, we had to jump or wind up on the ground with broken bones. We fell upon one another and were surrounded by wild human beasts and dogs delighting from the pain inflicted on us. For as you did hit the ground you either got up quickly or were beaten by the Gestapo men and bitten by the dogs. They seemed to disply such a profound pleasure in their sadism. Apparently, there were no fatalities, but there were many who could not make it off the ground on their own. Exhausted, thirsty, and now covered with dust, we were formed into groups and heavily guarded, led out of the depot. We were driven through the streets of Lublin in formation at a running tempo. Anybody slowing

down was beaten over the head with sticks or hurried by dogs.

The air was thick with dust from the running.. Although very tired, like most everybody else, I gathered up every ounce of my strength and kept on praying to reach the destination. I kept my eyes open, hopeful of seeing a passing Jew in the street, but there were none to be seen. What had been the fate of the Jews in Lublin in those days was unknown to me. I knew that they had been dealt with with exceptional harshness but I do not believe that the final solution was upon them then. This was 1940 and the organized mass liquidation of our people did not start before 1942.

After about an hour of marching that seemed never ending, we reached a camp surrounded with barbed wire. This camp, until the war, was a base for the Polish army. Since the war, the Germans first used it for a Polish P.W. camp and now as a transition place for different people. At the gate we were greeted again by a band of Gestapo men with police dogs. In order that they too might partake in the pleasures of sadism in getting their pound of flesh of the Jews and displaying their extreme cruelty and viciousness, they stopped us and let us through one by one, only after everyone of them hit us and only after they had trained their dogs on us. Once inside, we were shown to the barracks, where we were to stay overnight, and left to ourselves. This gave us a chance to clean up, tend to our wounds and get some rest. There were those who were badly injured and in need of medical attention. Fortunately, there are always those who rise to the occasion and are able to help others. I was lucky to come through this ordeal with minor cuts and bruises as did my brother and cousin. We were, though, very tired, exhausted and thirsty. Outside the barrack we quickly located clean drinking water. I kept drinking for hours before I was able to quench my thirst. In the evening we were given a bowl of soup and a slice

of bread. Eight o'clock was curfew time and all were committed to the barracks, which in a way we indeed welcomed. The bunks we were to sleep on were completely bare. Thus we covered ourselves with blankets we had brought along or with our own clothes. Nevertheless, nobody seemed to mind the discomfort after what we had been through in the last twenty-four hours.

We were troubled, however, concerning where we would eventually wind up and whether our days ahead would be a constant hell; in which case there was little hope that any of us would ever be returning home. In my own particular case, being together with my brother and my older cousin who came prepared, and had a certain amount of money to buy supplemental food or for any emergency that might arise, the situation for me was psychologically less desperate. The discussion and speculation over our fate did not continue very long between us because most of us fell asleep as soon as we laid down. I fell asleep while talking to my brother about home, wondering what our parents were doing and the price we Jews would be expected to pay before this war was over. The night passed uneventfully, providing us with a good rest and filling our hopes that the worst was over.

I woke up about eight o'clock in the morning and, after washing myself outside in the cool of the morning, I discovered a sty in my right eye which bothered me for two weeks thereafter. I attributed this problem to the enormous amount of dust from the previous day. At about nine a.m. we were given some black coffee and a slice of bread. Thereafter, we were lined up, counted and given a code of behaviour by an SS Man. Any attempt at escape would be punishable by hanging of the guilty and two more. Any disobedience or infraction would likewise be punishable by death he said. Then he told us that we would receive a bowl of soup for lunch and after lunch be marched back to the depot to continue our journey further to the east. The atmosphere seemed much more relaxed.

The excess hitting and pushing was absent and even the insults were more restrained. We were, of course, very encouraged that our plight was not hopeless. At about one p.m., after we had finished our soup, we were lined up again, formed into groups, led out of the camp and marched under heavy guard, mainly Ukrainian, back to Lublin terminal. And again we were packed into boxcars like cattle, again we situated ourselves as best as possible, hoping our journey would not be much longer.

This time the train seemed to go at a faster pace, or was it our feelings of reassurance, made possible by the sudden absence of violence, that made it appear that way. For time spent in total anxiety over a questionable future is a painful time and seemingly unending. Again we speculated in our discussions over a possible destination, work, food, camp accomodation and degree of discipline and security we would be subject to. Our journey otherwise was uneventfull. In the evening we arrived in Hrubieszow. I have read and heard about this small city before the war, never dreaming to be there and under these circumstances. In fact, in high school I had had a teacher who came from Hrubieszow who became very fond of me, not so much for what I did to earn it, but because of a student he had had in Hrubieszow whose last name, was the same as mine and to whom he was very attached, and of whom he spoke quite often. In contrast to Lublin, this was a smaller station. Perhaps we were to get a less violent reception because the train came to rest on the main track.

After about a half an hour's waiting, the guards opened the doors. It was about eight or nine o'clock in the evening. It was already dark but extensively lit up. We were met by SS men as in Lublin, but fewer in number, and, to our pleasant surprise, we were allowed off the boxcars one by one, slowly, without

their pushing and shoving. We were led outside of the station, formed into groups, counted, and ordered to sit down on the ground next to our packages. To our great and happy surprise, Jewish volunteers from the Hrubieszow community were allowed to greet us. They gave us a reception packed with emotion that touched the heart. And they did not come empty handed. They went over to each and every one of us, embraced us and kissed us. It was sometime before we let them out of our arms. Then they served us food, delicacies, goodies and drinks that only the rich could afford, even in pre-war Poland, and which were practically unobtainable. What did these dear hearts sacrifice in order to do this for us, I thought. For those of us who had no blankets they distributed blankets. They told us that we would be going to Weyeszyn, a Ukranian village about fifty kilometers away, and that we would be building a road to the Russian border. The S.S. and Ukranian guards kept a watchful eye but did not interfere in these heartbreaking, tearful, but happy moments of the Jewish soul. This beautiful Jewish experience accompanied me throughout my war years ordeal and I never stopped believing in the special sensitivity of the Jewish heart, even when I was later confronted, in some isolated instances, with inhuman treatment of Jew by Jew. The people of Hrubieszow not only helped us quench our thirst and hunger with their food, but helped us regain our hope of someday returning to our homes, because we finally knew our destination and the purpose of our being here. While they helped us we later learned, that they suffered immensely from the SS and the Ukranian soldiers, as Hrubieszow was a garrison city, and full of them. After several hours of waiting our happy meeting with the Jewish people of Hrubieszow came to an end.

As foretold by them, trucks arrived to take us as far as the road would go. Then we would continue by foot to Wezeszyn. With tears and good wishes we parted from our Hrubieszow brethren and got on the trucks. Except for a few Ukrainian military guards, we were now in the custody of civilian Ukrainians who were from here on to supervise us daily in our work and be responsible for us. They too had no love for us. They came equipped with special sticks which they used freely on us. We were glad however, that the SS had left us completely. It was midnight when we came to the end of the road. We were ordered off the trucks to resume our journey by foot. It was one of those nights of the full moon, as if especially lit for us. We could see one another and all around us. Except the moon, skies and fields there was nothing between us. Occasionally, you would see a house of a farmer and you thought with envy of the people inside, getting a restful night of sleep. These thoughts were to be with me time and again during the long years of my suffering. I walked with my brother and cousin in silence and I could not tell how many kilometers we covered. But when we came to the village of Wezeszyn it was already early morning.

We were divided into smaller groups and assigned barns with hay where we were to sleep for the duration of our stay. For drinking water and for washing there was a well in the yard. There were no latrines or anything of the sort. We were expected to use the field whenever needed. We fell asleep as soon as we literally hit the hay. After a few hours of sleep, we were awakened by the military Ukrainian guards. They told us that for the duration of our stay we would be their responsibility. They read to us a code of conduct which we were expected to adhere to and which, by all standards existing even at home, were not the worst. We would spend very little time in the barns, they said. In fact, the days would be filled with strenuous labor and only the nights would be

left to us. We were then led for our daily meal to a square centrally located to the barns we occupied.

On the side of the square there was built into the ground a huge round kettle where our meal was being cooked fired with wood from underneath the ground. The cook, standing at the edge was stirring the contents with a heavy pole. The dirt around the kettle was slushy and the flies had a field day. Seeing this, and although I was very hungry, I did not even get in line that day to claim my ration. The same was true for my brother and cousin. Later, however, by dire necessity, we had to get used to it and eat the soup, usually of barley. Subsequently, we were told to go back to the barns and rest as there would be no work that day. Since we were very lightly guarded, many of us likewise left the ranks and went to neighboring farmers, and those with money bought food. My cousin who had some money with him bought food enough for all three of us. As long as the money lasted we supplemented our rations this way.

It was still early afternoon when we came back to our quarters. The barn by then was a beehive of activity. Most everybody was busy arranging his limited space for sleeping, eating, resting, etc. Many were washing their clothes near the well. Others were writing letters, hoping to be able to send them home with somebody. I, together with my brother and cousin, had just eaten what he had bought and then proceeded to arrange for ourselves, as did everybody else, as comfortable a place to rest and sleep as was possible under the circumstances. The tension and fear that we had experienced during the journey had by this time subsided considerably, if not completely. The problem that was now bothersome was getting used to these living conditions. Also still questionable was whether they would not try to work us to death. But, as it was, we were too tired to think about it.

The next day we were awakened about 5 o'clock in the morning for our first day of work. As in the day before, we were led by a couple of military Ukrainian guards to the square where the big kettle was built in the ground which served as kitchen and mess hall. This time black coffee made from grain was being boiled, and, since it was drizzling added to the flavor of it. If I remember correctly, I believe that by the time I left the place, which was about three months later, they had put up a canopy above the kettle. But until that time, our soups and coffees were enriched by the elements. They gave us a slice of black bread and some black coffee and off we went to work. We marched through the center of Wepeszyn which was a colorful Ukrainian village with many old Greek Orthodox churches built in the Eastern Russian style. Every Sunday the bells of these churches chimed in a special delightful way, characteristic of the Ukrainians in this area. The houses were built in the very same style, very primitive but very colorful. As I later learned the skills of survival, I sometimes stole away from the group and spent a few minutes keeping warm in some of those houses of the Ukrainians. I found to my pleasant surprise that even as they favored the Germans over the Russians and the Poles, and while they collaborated with the Germans, they were individually a very friendly people and felt sorry for us. In my quite frequent excursions I found food, shelter and warmth from these people. Very seldom was I turned away or threatened with being delivered to the authorities.

After walking for about two or three miles we came to the place where all the equipment such as wheelbarrows, shovels, hammers, etc., was stored. After we had been divided up among the foremen, who were all Ukrainians, and after everybody had received some equipment, we were assigned work, some digging the ground, others filling up wheelbarrows and still others moving the dirt to other places. There were engineers who supervised the work and made sure that when the asphalt was

finally laid that the road would be able to handle all the heavy war equipment and machinery. The Germans were contemplating a great move. One could see even then, in 1940, that the Germans were preparing an eventual push to the east. As we built the road forward, everyday we had to walk a little farther. In the end, we were walking on an asphalt road rather than on dirt as we had originally started. But we, the Jews, were the ones who paid the price for it. The labor was very hard, especially for teenage boys like me who had never done hard physical labor. I remember that when I was first given a wheelbarrow and made to fill it up to the absolute top with dirt and stones and made to lift it and push it for a long distance, I thought I was going to die from exhaustion. The empty wheelbarrow by itself was heavy enough for me. If this was not enough the Ukranian foreman, noticing the hardship, took special delight in hurrying you on with several hits with his stick on your back. As a general rule, we were not only made to work but to suffer at the same time. And suffer we did, from beatings, indignities, hunger, sickness and, before long, from lice because of our unsanitary conditions. Thus I was actually driven to take the chance, quite often in the morning and especially later in the season when the weather became more inclement, to dissappear from the group and seek shelter in a neighboring peasant's house and rejoin the group at night while walking back to the barns. After having been in Wezeszyn for a while, even shelter in a peasants house was a painful experience. For outside in the cold the lice were not as bothersome as in the warmth of the inside. In the evening of that first day we walked back, a very tired lot, to the barn, stopping on the way in our "field kitchen" for our well-deserved soup. Thus we worked and slaved as did the Jews in olden days under Pharaoh and hoped for a brighter day as have the Jews for centuries.

Wereszyn was a hard experience for me, and with its anxiety, deprivation, and home sickness, would have left a great mark on me had it not been for the events that preceded it and the horrible events that followed, culminating in the destruction of the Jewish community in my hometown. For while the journey to Lublin and the reception there and the atrocities committed on us after my return home have become entrenched in my mind and result to this day in recurring nightmares, Wereszyn became just another link in a tragic drama. After three months there, with the road that we were building taking shape, and with many of us becoming diseased because of lack of sanitary facilities, hunger and hard labor, the Ukrainians began to release the very ill and send them home. In order to qualify for the release a Polish doctor who came once a week from Hrubieszow had to certify whether applicants were sufficiently ill. Since most of us indeed qualified, and since they could only release a certain number each week, it created problems for those who could still walk. I and my brother were in this category. But then our father came to our rescue and it happened quite simply.

We had never completely lost contact with our parents. Whenever we could, we had sent letters home and on one such occasion an official of the Judenrat from our city came to visit us, bringing packages and mail. We explained in one of our letters to our parents that we might be the last to be released. One evening, coming back from work, after fetching our soup as usual, resigned to our lot and not suspecting anything, our names were called to see the doctor. We immediately knew that somebody had a hand in it and that our release would soon follow. Several days later, after being examined by the doctor, he certified our release. That night, although very tired, we never slept. We had a suspicion that father, because of his special identification as an important Jew, had been able to come to Hrubieszow and was responsible for our early

release. We wondered about mother, our sister, and conditions at home with great impatience, and wished the time away so that we could be reunited. Others in our barn were not so lucky as they gave us letters for their loved ones.

The following day, early in the morning, we said goodbye to our friends and wishing that they would soon be going home too, a small group of tired, exhausted and lice-infested boys were loaded on a truck for the first lap of their journey back home to Czestochowa. The official papers for travel in our hands confirmed that this indeed was real and no dream. I looked forward to being reunited with my family, to clean clothing and a clean, restful bed. I also hoped that our father was waiting for us in Hrubieszow. It took about an hour to travel to Hrubieszow, but it seemed much longer. The truck was stopped on several occasions for clearance. Passing through the city I noticed that the place was full of black-uniformed SS, storm troopers and the regular army. We finally arrived at the Jewish section of the city and were let off at a private Jewish family who had converted their meager quarters into rented sleeping accommodations.

The place was full with people coming and going like a regular transit station. The majority slept on the floor but nobody seemed to mind. As we had hoped our father was there waiting for us. Our meeting was a highly emotional experience. We embraced, we kissed, cried and stared at each other. For we had not seen each other in three months and had been taken away unexpectedly and cruelly. He saw us now in a very poor condition very frail and heavily infested with bugs. It was impossible to sit with us and not get infested. There was nothing that

could be done about it there. My father seemed to have changed too. For he was much thinner and looked much older than his age. Father was then in his early forties. It seemed that he must have suffered a great deal. We asked him about mother and sister and general conditions at home. He tried to be cheerful but he was unable to hide the fact that things were getting worse daily. Every day brings a new anti-Jewish decree and many Jews are faced with starvation, he cried. But for better or worse, he rejoiced, that we would soon be all together again. He also told us that we would sleep tonight here on the floor and that tomorrow we had reservations to go home by train. He wanted to go out to buy some food for us whereupon we asked him to let us come along with him. It was very hard for me and my brother to be in a warm room in our condition. Outside in the cold the bugs did not seem to bother us so much.

It was a cloudy day and it was snowing heavily. As we came out and walked about a block a SS man passed us by. We paid no attention to him. Suddenly he turned around and screamed for my father to come back. Before saying anything he hit my father on the face then asked: "You damn Jew, don't you know to salute a German by taking off your hat. Immediately run forward, come back and salute me or I will shoot you." My father picked himself up ran forward came back and saluted the SS man. Where upon he again started to hit him till he bloodied him screaming this time "How dare you, you damn Jew, salute a German."

After this shocking incident we quickly returned to our sleeping place and there father obtained some food for us. The people there told us that what happened to our father was a daily occurrence in Hrubieszow, that he was lucky that he did not get killed. Before retiring for the night, father told us how mother had carried on after we had been taken away and how he did not rest until he had secured

passage to Hrubieszow. He had been here for a week before he could make contact with the doctor who had jurisdiction over us. Once he had, it was just another simple case of pay-off. The next day my brother and I did our best to relieve ourselves of as many lice as possible to ease our suffering. To clean ourselves completely was impossible without replacing our clothes. Thus, with impatience, we looked forward to our coming home. We packed what little belongings we still cared to take with us, because most everything was so badly infested, and boarded with some other people a horse-driven buggy to take us to the Hrubieszow train terminal. Before we left we made sure that the star of David armband was in place on everybody's arm to identify us as Jews and hopefully to avoid trouble. At the station we went inside to finish up all the formalities before we could board the train. Since there was still time before the train arrived, we sat down on a bench and observed the people coming in to take the same train we were waiting for or trains to other directions. The only Jews here were those, like us, released from Węgrszyn labor camp going home to Czestochowa. By all standards, it was a small station, and the men, women and some children waiting, sat or stayed in groups and conversed mainly in Polish and Ukrainian. I sat, listened and reflected. They spoke small talk and acted in a way that seemed usual for people who were about to depart for a trip or part with relatives or friends. At this point I envied them very much. But, at the same time, I did not feel despair, as I often had on our way down here. For though we could not move as freely as the Poles and the Ukrainians, we were not going home as we came in, guarded and in locked box cars, but in regular trains. This limited new won freedom which I felt in every bone of my body, which I was embracing with my heart and soul, seemed unreal and precarious. Setting there I promised myself that I would never again expose myself so innocently as to be caught. Even at

this point, after all the shocking experiences that I had lived through, mass and total murder of our people did not enter my mind.

My deep thought was interrupted by the whistle of the coming train which meant that we had better get ready, barring any last minute holdups, and go to the train. The gate of the waiting hall leading to tracks was opened and people began to file out. Our tickets and papers were again checked by a Polish and German functionary as we passed through the gate. At last we were on the train that in a matter of hours would bring us back home again. The train was packed to capacity, but we managed to get seats, due largely to our infested condition and to pity. We were recognized as freed camp inmates needing the rest and nobody seemed to care to be squeezed next to us in standing position. The train was stopping in all stations and people were coming on and off at each station. Again I had the opportunity to observe that, in spite of the war and shortages, except for the Jews, people were leading normal lives. -- People were commuting freely to and from work. There were those making visits or going just for sheer pleasure. Eventually, the short-distance commuters were gone, thus allowing for more space. My father was napping and I was engaging my brother in small talk, making observations of the country side through which we were passing. This part of the country had luckily escaped any war destruction. A train conductor, accompanied by a German military policeman, came through our car checking the travel tickets and papers. The M.P. man scrutinized us no more than he did the other passengers. He just checked our papers and moved on to the others. Again the train stopped at some station. Some new passengers came on and others left. Little by little, only Polish and German was spoken. There were no Ukrainians left on the train. As we moved westward and closer to home

we were coming into territory inhabited strictly by Poles and of course, Jews.

By now we were alone in the compartment with only a few other boys who had been released with us. They were going home by themselves and wondered if their parents were aware of their homecoming. They could not have written in time to reach their parents as they themselves had not known of their impending release. They were happy and talked, each in his own way, about their imminent reunion with their families, hoping it to be without shock. The country side was beginning to look more and more familiar which meant that shortly we would be in Czestochowa. Looking out the window, we could already see the crosses and towers of the ancient cloister situated on the outskirts of the city. We then came into the city, passing familiar landmarks and streets. At this point I was filled with love for the city in which I was born and grew up, in spite of the fact that I had suffered from early childhood so much brutal antisemitism from the city government and people. I guess that these things were now pushed to the back of my mind and the only things I cared to think about were my Jewish Czestochowa, my happy childhood, my roaming the streets, the schools and the good things they had taught me, my happy times with my friends and family within those confines. The train slowed down as it neared the terminal, and people prepared to disembark. We too, somewhat nervously, made everything ready as the train stopped and a voice over the loudspeaker announced arrival in Czestochowa. This was the first and last time since the war that I would be passing through the terminal and waiting halls of the Czestochowa station.

Before the war the station had always been a beehive of activity, the waiting halls full of people and the restaurants packed. As a little boy I used to come here quite often to watch the trains arriving or leaving. Now the place looked

half-empty. There were military police, Gendarmes, and German soldiers all over the place. After being checked out we finally found ourselves outside the terminal on Pilsudskiego street, tired but happy to be walking home, which was only fifteen minutes away. But then there we were and then, at last, we were home, mother and sister crying as they embraced us. Home again, and reunited, we hoped to stay that way.

Upon entering the house we shed our clothing while mother boiled hot water for us so that we could bathe and delouse ourselves. Mother kept crying while watching our clothes practically moving by themselves. In order not to infest the house she burned all the clothing we arrived in. For several days we stayed home, recuperating, while mother was taking care of us. And for a while after our return we were shielded by the Judenrat from any kind of labor, as were all those who had spent time in labor camps. This respite gave us a chance to plan for work that would make us more productive in the eyes of the Germans and give us the most protection from any future harassment, call ups, or sudden pick-up for labor camps. My father still enjoyed the status of "Important Jew", but providing even a bare living for a family was becoming an enormous task. After our return mother tried hard to rebuild our strength, lavishing us with the best of most food possible. But even with all effort, meat was hard to come by.

In time, my brother went back to work on the railroad. I, however, never returned to work at the Judenrat because we felt that it was the least secure place in case of emergency or at such times as there was need for forced German labor. Another drawback was the distaste I felt in being associated, if only in a remote way, with recruiting fellow Jews for forced labor. I, therefore, stayed away from work as long as possible, using every kind of excuse. Finally, I was called in by the Judenrat and ordered to report every morning to the labor office

of the Judenrat for assignment. I did this for a while and found myself working at different places for the German military. Then, one day, I was assigned to the steel works in Raskow which had been taken over by the German industrial concern, Hasag, and since known by that name. The work was hard, as it had to do with everything from unloading the raw ore, to smelting and processing the ore until it was finished into all kinds of industrial metals and steels like railroad tracks and tools.

The place was enormous, with many different departments and plants, stretching over many acres of land. The majority of the employees were Polish except for the supervisory personnel which was German military. I liked it there right away. For, indeed, if anything could have been considered protection, working there meant the highest form of it. Besides, once inside I felt a certain measure of freedom of movement and contact with the world. The Polish employees, despite their general anti Jewish feeling, did not mind exchanging food or clothing with us. So my job presented an opportunity for me to help in feeding our family. The plant also provided a hearty soup for lunch for all employees, including the Jewish free labor. I immediately requested that the Judenrat assign me there on a permanent basis. Thus, for awhile, despite all the hardships and despite the tough winter of 1941, with coal for heating hard to come by and people using their furniture to heat, our family life again had some semblance of normalcy. We exchanged visits with our relatives within the city quite often. My grandfather Kantor was suffering from arteriosclerosis. He was moving about very well but was in need of special care which my grandmother could not provide. My father tried to help as much as possible but it was difficult to provide a decent diet for our family, much less for two families. The streets were impossible to walk without being accosted by the German Gendarmes or by the Polish police. Anti-Jewish decrees that affected every facet of life kept flowing like water from a fountain. Yet little did we realize then how much worse

it could still get. In 1941 we still had faith in the free world and hope that we would not be abandoned completely.

Ever since the Germans occupied Czestochowa there had been constant talk about the creation of a special section for Jews called the "Ghetto". For all practical purposes the majority of Jews already lived in predominantly Jewish sections. However, a ghetto diminished in size the already overcrowded Jewish sections and was bound to create serious dislocations and aggravate the already terrible overcrowding. Furthermore, the creation of such a ghetto would further restrict Jewish movement and contact with the gentile population. In April, 1941, the so called "Big Ghetto" became reality. The Ghetto, by law, was indeed cut in size and ran from the bridge overlooking the railroad tracks on the first section of the Aleje Blvd. on the west, to the Warta river, the farthest point in the east. To the north it ran parallel to Ulica Warszawska, a little bit just beyond Rynek Warszawski, and to the south just a small stretch parallel to Ulica ^{NARUTOWICZA} ~~Maturewieza~~. A number of streets with predominately Jewish occupancy like Pilsudskiego, Strazacka and others were left out. The purpose was obvious, to create optimum conditions for disease, epidemic and death from overcrowding, undernourishment, and physical and mental torment. The few gentiles living within the ghetto were ordered to move. Jews were forbidden, under the penalty of death, to leave the Ghetto. At all points of entrance to the Ghetto, Polish and Jewish policemen were stationed.

The Jewish police force was established on orders from the Germans, by the Judenrat, to help keep law and order in the Ghetto. But they were used by the Germans in their dirty work against the Jews. Some who joined the police did so, hoping in this way to protect themselves from harassment, labor camps and deprivation. Acceptance in the force was neither automatic nor easy. One had to know the right people in the Judenrat and have the means to pay for it. Nevertheless, the majority

of the Jewish police gave a good account of itself. In their capacity, like the Judenrat, they tried, whenever possible, to ease the suffering of their people. There were a few, however, who in the process, became zealous executioners of German orders. To be beaten by a German or a Pole did not, somehow, hurt so much as being hurt by a fellow Jew. The eventual fate of the Jewish police force was neither worse nor better than that of the rest of the Jews. Eventually, they were all liquidated. Occasionally, German Gendarmes joined the Polish and Jewish police at the checkpoints of the Ghetto. Signs at the checkpoints were posted which read on the Aryan side in Polish and German: "Entrance forbidden because of contagious diseases". On the Jewish side it simply read in Polish, German, and Hebrew: "Death penalty for leaving the Ghetto."

Over 45,000 Jews were squeezed into an area capable of accomodating one-third of the number. Hundreds of families outside the Ghetto were forced quickly to find accomodations for themselves and their belongings and relatives. The move was traumatic. Our own family was not greatly affected for we already lived within the created boundaries of the Ghetto. But we were forced to share our apartment with an older widower and his son of my age. It was a slight adjustment that we had to make in our living space, but I am sure that this action, however inconvenient, would not have prevented my family from surviving the war.

In general, life in the Big Ghetto was very hard. We, the Jews, were stripped of every legitimate source of income. Except for those on the fringes who risked their lives by crossing the borders of the Ghetto and smuggling in goods from the rural areas, those who were able to conceal accumulated wealth from before the war and those in key positions in the Judenrat, the majority lived on diets from official ration cards for Jews and on an additional soup in the public kitchen of the Judenrat if they were members of the forced labor groups. Medication and medical

care was limited strictly to the extent of local creativity and mutual help. Because of the overcrowding, sanitary care was also at a minimum. Under these circumstances it did not take long for disease and death to increase dramatically. The Jewish hospital in Czestochowa, situated outside the Ghetto, which had before the war been the nicest, biggest, and best equipped, was now taken^{OVER} by the Germans. Jewish sick were now quartered in a former school converted into a hospital on Vlica Krotka.

The Ghetto became a hunting ground for the Gestapo, the Gendarmes, the German and Polish police. In many instances it was the Polish police that were more brutal than the Germans. And, in all cases, it was the Polish police who pointed the way. No sooner was the Ghetto set up than the Germans caught one Moshe Janowicz near city hall outside the Ghetto. They forced him to run towards the Ghetto and then shot him in the back. He became the first victim of the new law. Thus, Jews suffered and died from starvation, disease, cold, and from all kinds of deaths imaginable at the hands of their tormentors. Yet the majority, in spite of everything still hoped for better days. And it was not easy. For the news reaching us wasn't encouraging at all.

The Germans had conquered and occupied most of Europe. The invasion of Russia had led them to within forty miles of Moscow. The Germans hate propaganda machine against the Jews on all media was unrelenting, openly threatening the liquidation of the Jews. Suddenly, in December, 1941, the news reached us that the tide had turned and that the Soviets had started a smashing counterattack. This news filled our hearts with joy and renewed hope. There was a guarded feeling that this indeed might be the beginning of the end for Hitler. But would the end of Hitler come soon enough for us? And then the Russian winter took its toll of the Germans. The German armies found themselves short of warm clothing in general and fur in particular.

Again an order went out to the Jews in the Ghetto forbidding us under the penalty of death to own or to have any furs or clothing with fur. In a matter of twenty-four hours the Germans confiscated five boxcars of furs from the Ghetto.

So, however it went for the Germans, we Jews were destined to pay the price. Their victories they celebrated with even more and harsh decrees against us, delighting in our pain and deriving amusement therefrom. Their defeats they blamed on us likewise, inflicting punishment on us. Jewish holidays in the Ghetto, which before the war had ^{ENJOYED & OBSERVED BY THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN GENERAL AND THE PIOUS JEWS} been looked forward to, in particular, were especially dreaded. For it was on those days especially that they rounded us up, forcing us into a main square of the city, and in the front of the Poles, heaped indignities and degradation on us, Jews, nevertheless, congregated in cellars and places thought more secure to hold holiday prayer. In spite of all precautions, many a place like this was broken into by the Germans and the people forced out in their long prayer shawls, beaten and ridiculed. Jews with beards were given special attention in these displays by having their hair mercilessly torn out. This state of affairs, had it been allowed to continue, would have very much reduced to our ranks. But the majority still would have persisted, as we have done for almost 2000 years, and a sizable Jewish community in Cestochowa would have survived. As it was, however, the barbaric mind of the Nazi beast and his many helpers had already given the verdict for mass murder of our people in Cestochowa. The means had already been tested. Time was rapidly running out on us.

Rosh Hoshana, 1942, almost three years after the beginning of the war, was a terribly depressing time for the Jews in Cestochowa. There was this instinct feeling of imminent disaster that only those living on the edge of it for some time learn to recognize and feel. Information was circulating that Ghettos in other cities of Poland were being liquidated and that those not killed during the liquidation were being deported. Where to? Nobody dared to actually say, but almost everybody seemed to have

an idea. The question of at least a passive resistance, disregarding orders, raised by prewar leaders of Zionist groups, was rejected by the Judenrat on the basis that this might endanger the one ^{TWELVE} hundred and twenty thousand forced laborers considered safe. Besides, the majority was physically and mentally so exhausted and broken that they could have done very little and cared even less.

The process that had brought people to this point had been a gradual one. It stemmed to some extent from our background and mentality of non-violence and passive resistance to persecution. We had always survived, though never without paying a price. The practically total adherence by most Jews to their religion and to the belief of eventual deliverance, although helpful in withstanding all trials and tribulations, also contributed to this mentality. The Germans studied their victims closely and used ^{THEM} ~~this~~ this way, never excluding a hope of survival, however minimal, until the victim was completely demoralized and helpless. This was the basic picture on September 21, 1942, the last Yom Kippur day when Jews in Czestochowa in the Ghetto still could be considered a community. This was also the last day of Jewish family life in Czestochowa. This day was the beginning of the end of centuries of Jewish history in Czestochowa, centuries of endeavor in every field which contributed so richly not only to the Jews of Czestochowa and Poland, but to the total community and mankind. This was the day that marked the beginning of the end of all Jewish life in Czestochowa.

For most Jews this Yom Kippur day began as just another working day. But there were still many who refrained from work and food and cried their hearts out in prayer. I did not go to work on this day and joined my father and a few other neighbors in the attic of our building for prayer. In the afternoon, as customary, we took a break in the prayers. I went out in the street for a breath of fresh air. An acquaintance of mine, coming from work, told me at the time that a train with Ukrainian SS had arrived at the terminal to help in the deportation of the Jews.

When I went back to conclude the remainder of the prayers I thought that I was the only one with this dreadful knowledge. To my amazement everybody already knew about it. Needless to say, the concluding prayers became more emotional and heartbroken. At the end people parted with tears in their eyes exclaiming the hopelessness of this our last Yom Kippur.

By the evening the Ghetto was surrounded by the Ukranian guards. At night the lights in the streets of the Ghetto were not turned off as they had been every night and the Ukrainians appeared in every street and in every intersection of the Ghetto to guard against any possible escape by even a single Jew. On September 22, 1942, the day after Yom Kippur, the deportation of Czestochowa Jews to their deaths began in earnest.

The liquidation of the "Big Ghetto" and the deportation of the Jews of Czestochowa was done by an efficient plan. The Ghetto was divided into several sections and while one section was being emptied, the Jews in the remaining ones were restricted to their homes to await their fate. The streets were empty of people except for those detained by the Gestapo to do the work of taking away the dead or such other work that the Gendarmes deemed necessary. The total action lasted several weeks and there was always an intermission in the drama of a couple days between the end of the liquidation in one section and its beginning in another. This was done because of a shortage of trains for carrying the victims to the Treblinka gas chambers and, at the same time, to confuse the remaining Jews into a hopeless belief that once a certain quota had been met they would be spared.

There were about five of these so-called "actions". Our street was not among the first to go but we were virtual prisoners in our own homes. The gate of the building was locked, and while we could come together with our neighbors, we had no way of getting food, fuel, or taking care of emergencies. We knew that perserving the family was becoming less likely. Still, father urged me and my brother to stick together

wherever possible. "There is some hope for you, that you will survive this holocaust, he said to us", but expressed grave doubts about himself, mother and sister. Although in the end we had very little food, we were not hungry. We met frequently with our neighbors but there was very little conversation, just a silent meeting of minds afraid to say what everyone thought, looks of despair and occasional tears, sure of some dreadful death, yet hopeful of a last-minute miracle. In those days of waiting, which for most became the last days of their lives, were really spent in a vacuum of total resignation.

The windows of our house became the only means of contact with outside. We spent hours watching Jews from other streets passing under heavy guards of Gendarmes, Ukrainians, and Polish police, with whatever they could carry on their backs, walking to the point of selection on the Daszynski square. We also watched the horses and buggies carrying the killed to the mass graves. There were hundreds of Jews killed in the first day of the action. The disabled or infirm, those who would not walk to the selection point, were shot on the spot. Many others who looked suspicious or for some reason disliked by the deporting bandits, were likewise shot. After all, this was open season for killing Jews as they were marked for extinction anyhow. Thus this was the setting as our family and our neighbors in the buildings, and I suppose the rest of the people in the block, were awaiting our turns to leave our homes forever and to take our last steps to the selection point. For whatever our fate, it was preferable than the waiting, wondering, and the constant fear of the unknown.

On the second week of the liquidation our turn came. We were ordered to leave our homes and take nothing except small packages of clothing or personal affects. Our family, with the rest of the people in the building, said our last good byes and stepped outside. We were immediately surrounded by Gendarmes, Ukrainians, and police and made to wait in front of the building. In the meantime, other Gendarmes and SS

entered the building to search for possible defectors and disabled. We heard several shots but it was impossible to know whether they actually killed anybody. As I looked around I could not tell if anybody was left in the building, because, as the liquidation started, many of the neighbors had joined their relatives, for the sake of being together. I was later told that Mrs. Richter, the mother of the tailor who lived in the building, an elderly lady who could not move well, was shot. She had begged for her life, but one of the gendarmes mercilessly pumped three bullets into her. Satisfied that nobody alive was left in the building, the gendarmes came out and we were joined to a column moving towards the selection point on Daszynskiego square. As we kept moving on, people from neighboring buildings joined us as their buildings were cleared. It was a grim picture. When we were still in our home and looking out the windows, we merely witnessed the agony of our people as they were driven to the selection point. But now, I had the opportunity of looking the devil straight in the eye and seeing his relish and pleasure, not just in killing us but purposely extending the pain and agony. They pushed and kicked us, wounding many of us. They were especially harsh to women and children. There were those who begged to be shot because of their pain but the beasts would not oblige. However, they did not hesitate to shoot at random, killing and wounding many. The cries of the babies in their mothers' arms and the children who walked with their parents, kindled no human feeling in the gendarmes, Ukrainians, Gestapo, and others guarding us.

In my anxiety, as I kept walking with my family in silence, observing the deserted buildings which only weeks ago were teeming with Jewish life, and seeing the atrocities being committed, mixed with the cries and laments of my people, my heart cried and wondered why? I first wondered how a civilized people like the Germans could produce such beasts, but I came to

suspect that, to our tormentors, the sounds of agony that were so clear to me were a beautiful symphony to their ears. I wondered, have we, the Jewish people, sinned so much to deserve this? And, if so, how does one measure this suffering of a people? The mental and physical torment of this walk to the selection point alone, should cleanse the sins, not only of a people, but of all mankind.

Those were my thoughts as we walked towards the point of selection. Slowly, but surely, we were driven to that place, kept in line with blows of their rifle butts. And then the place, Daszyręskiego square, point of selection or, rather, point of infamy. We were led down the middle of the square and, as we were nearing the end of the square where the elite of the Gestapo and the gendarmes were waiting for us, we were formed into a single line. The chief butcher, a German by the name of Degenhart, was personally conducting the selection. He was stocky, fat and in his middle age. In one hand he had his stick and in the other his pistol. Behind him was a great number of high ranking Germans with their sticks, clubs and dogs, partaking in the martyrdom of our people, laughing, joking, and enjoying themselves. As soon as we entered the square, and were in the face of death, we seemed to gain strength and become contemptuous of our masters. A continuous lament of "Shema Israel" came out of the hearts of the people and the final prayers which are said before one's death, were echoed from one end of the square to the other. The guards were dumbfounded and confused. Their insults, shoutings and beatings, were of no avail. At last the Jews had found a way, at least partially to spoil their feast.

And then we were coming closer to face the henchman, who hit you with his stick and pointed, screaming "to the left!, to the right! You are to die, you are to live, at least for now. He did not actually say these words but

everybody knew what it meant: "to the left, to the right, to the left, to the left, to the left!" For a long time these words kept ringing in my ears. And then there were those pious Jews, religious leaders, who moved up in the line facing the degenerate Degenhart, smiling and expressing pity for him, at the same time comforting us not to worry, for as soon as they entered the kingdom of God and faced their maker, they would pray for our welfare and the salvation of our people. This was strength, greatness, and belief in the unconquerability of our people at its best. These expressions were not lost on Degenhart for he became bewildered, furious and mad and took these martyrs out for special treatment. But what more could he do to them! They had conquered him and he did not even know it. And again: "left, right, left, left", mothers with babies, children, men, women. "To the right!", men, young men and more young men. And so we kept moving up the line, I, along with my loved ones, friends and neighbors. Each step a step of no return. I felt a numbness in all my body. Had I been killed then I would have felt no pain. When I got my senses back I found myself past the line of selection, lucky to still be together with my father and brother, marching down the Aleje Boulevard, past the bridge on Wilsona St., towards Krotka St. and a plant named Metalurgia.

The plant had a huge yard. The gates opened and we were let in. The place was already packed to capacity. Inside, we kept together, but mingled with those who came here before us. We tried to find out from them what was going on out there. It was not until then that we really were hit by the loss of mother and sister. We came to realize that we would never see them again, alive or dead. This was true with all others. There was not one total family. My father was crying and so were a great many other people. Many could not cry anymore. The people who had been ordered to the left

were the majority. They included the old, all the children and babies. They were escorted down the left side of the Aleje Boulevard on the Pilsudskiego Street towards the depot where trains and freight cars were already waiting for them to carry them to the Treblinka gas chambers. Meanwhile, here, the place served as a transit center. Some were taken to do the work of gathering up the dead for burial and when the work was completed they were returned here. They told of atrocities and horrors unimaginable to the human mind. Among the dead they gathered and carried on platforms and special buggies used for the distribution of meat, they found many people who were unconcious but still alive. The gendarmes, rather than to kill these to ease their pain, hurled insults at the workers threatening them with the same fate if they did not do their work properly. The favored saying of the gendarmes was: the Jews are not even worth a bullet. Thus at the mass grave on Kawia Street where all the bodies were taken, there were some that were still alive at burial. All during the day different German employees came to pick up their laborers, whomever they pleased to fill their contingency. Those picked would not return but were put into temporary quarters at the place of labor.

Everyday some left and new people came in. After all the employees were satisfied with their number of slaves and all the Jews of what had been the big Ghetto were deported, those remaining in the Metalurgia plant were treated to another selection. The majority of them were also escorted to the trains for Treblinka. A small number was left to prepare a much-shrunken Ghetto for occupancy by those now quartered at the places of labor. As we, my father and brother, were walking around together, trying to find people from streets where our relatives used to live, in order to learn of their fate, workers for the German air force were called to come forward.

As my brother had once worked for them and he thought it to be a fairly good place to work, considering our predicament, he decided, upon discussing it with me and father, to step forward. With kisses and tears, we parted from my brother wishing him good health, survival and reunion with us. Soon thereafter they called for workers of the Hasag concern and I too took leave of my father. I wished him well and asked him to send information to me and brother, of his whereabouts as soon as possible. I hoped that he too would be included in some good work force. However, the Germans did not think him fit enough and he wound up in the final selection and was deported to Treblinka. This then, was the last time I saw my father. My father was a gentle man. He valued life highly and had a great desire for it. However, when I said good-bye to him, for the last time, I left him a broken man, mentally and physically. This could very well be why he did not make it in spite of his relative young age.

With my bag of clothing and personal belongings I pushed through the mass of people, towards the gate of the Metalurgia Plant to report as a laborer of the Hasag steel plant. A civilian German of Hasag checked my credentials and again I found myself waiting with a group of others to be escorted this time to the Hasag plant. As the number of workers required by Hasag was larger than those who had reported, we had to wait till they picked the additional people. In spite of the fact that our labor was to be without pay, that we were not to be cared for even as one would care for a machine or an animal, but rather to be discarded as soon as incapable of doing the work, they nevertheless were choosy of whom they picked. They wanted young, healthy looking men only. It is really hard to describe the scene. The closest thing I can compare it to would be the picking of cattle in a free market. In the meantime, while this was going on and we were

waiting, I felt as though my bitter cup had been filled up and was beginning to overflow. I began to wonder why I should strive to survive if we were all doomed anyhow. I was bothered by a constant calling within me, where is your mother and sister now? I could speculate that they were still alive, but I knew that if they were they wouldn't be much longer. But why had I abandoned them? What would happen to father? As I thought about these things, I had a feeling they were all saying to me: "you have not abandoned us. For you to give up now would be abandoning us. Go on therefore and persevere for us, and for our people." This call within me was to recur many times later and to give me strength to go on when I most needed it.

With the picking and counting over for the umpteenth time, we were ordered to fall in for a final count. The Germans, satisfied with the number, surrounded us with armed guards of the Hasag industrial police. The gates of the Metalurgia opened and we were led outside once again. On the way to Hasag, the former Peltzery, a leather-processing plant, which the Germans were converting to the manufacture of generators, small arms and ammunition, we were led through some of the abandoned streets of the Big Ghetto. The houses were deserted and sidewalks littered with a mixture of clothing, pots and pans, prayer books and prayer shawls (taleisim) drenched in blood. The emptiness and the smell of slaughter was sickening and repulsive yet I did not feel the desire to run away and to forget if I could. Instead, I felt a desire to go over, pick up and touch each item, and kiss the spilled blood. But I was free to do neither. Instead, we marched on as if untouched by it all. We entered the Aleje Boulevard outside the former ghetto where Poles lived a normal life. Driven by the Werkshutz, the industrial police of Hasag, even at this hour of our peril, there were Poles lining the streets jeering and heaping insults on us. The contrast, the line between life and

death so thin and yet so invisible and so different, like day and night.

It was early evening in midweek. People were walking up and down the boulevard. The restaurants, cafes and casinos reverberating with music and dance, life teeming all over the place. People seemed unmoved and indifferent to events on the other side, O.K., at most, looking the otherway, happy that the Germans were solving the Jewish question. Many others were actively helping in the process. At the Hasag plant we were greeted by more Werkschutz and SS with dogs. Some of the Werkschutz and even the SS were Poles of German extraction, called Volksdeutsche. They were especially brutal to us. Besides German they also spoke Polish. Again we were lined up for inspection by an SS captain. He was tall and had one eye. The other eye he had supposedly lost in the war. In his black uniform he looked the picture of a beast. He did not speak but bark. He passed by each and every one of us screaming some kind of insult like: "why don't you stand up straight you damn Jew" or he would stop and jeer "Dreckfass" (barrel of shit), no more swindles and international communist conspiracy for you," all along keeping his stick in motion, touching some, hitting others. Then he laid down the law of penalty of death for almost anything, even for speaking too loud. I had a feeling that even the air to breathe would be forbidden to us. This was followed by a nuisance game of hats on and off on command. It continued again, with insults and hits, until the caps and hats of everyone came on and off in unison. At long last, we were given a slice of bread and black coffee and dismissed. We were led to a vacant second floor building and assigned spaces on the floor to sleep. In my bag with clothing I had a couple blankets. I stretched one out on the floor and the other I laid out to cover myself with. The bag itself I used to support my head. The spaces next to me were occupied by two brothers, who had come with their parents to live in our building from a

small place near Czestochowa named Klobucko shortly after the outbreak of the war. They too had lost their parents in the selection. However, their parents had been sent directly to the depot for deportation. We were glad to be together and became very close. As we situated ourselves we talked about the day's bloody events, exchanged impressions and wondered where all this would lead us to. Before long the Werkschutz who guarded us turned off the lights and ordered us to sleep and silence.

In spite of the late hour and my exhaustion, it took me a while to fall into a guarded sleep and then only to be awakened by the screams of foremen and Werkschutz men. A freight train of steel and other materials had pulled in on the tracks of the plant and waited to be unloaded. The plant was still in the process of conversion and the Germans were trying feverishly to get it set up and going as fast as possible so as to help the German war machine. As they only needed a certain number of men, they picked at random, kicking and shoving those asleep. I had the privilege of being chosen, and before I knew it, I was, along with others, unloading a box car with cement bags. It was a dark cold night, we could hardly have seen one another had it not been for the lanterns of the guards. Driven by the guards to do a fast job on top of being sleepy and dangerously tired, I somehow made it through a few hours of this hard labor. When I came back to my sleeping place it was 3 o'clock in the morning. I fell to the floor and at an instant I was fast asleep.

At 6 o'clock in the morning we were ordered to get up. The hall we occupied was long and narrow, wide enough for two rows of people to stretch out and as much space to walk through. At the end of the hall was a door that led to a room where two Werkschutz stood guard. The room led to a stairway and to the ground floor. When we were awakened, the Werkschutz allowed us to the ground floor where we could wash and make use of a latrine. These Werkschutz were so bad and heartless

that they purposely had to make every minute of our lives miserable. For instance, letting us wash and use the latrine they considered a privilege. Often, while we were only half-done and at times hadn't even started, they forced us back to our habitat, all along not sparing words of insults and degradation of us. In time, though, we learned to stay a step ahead and to improvise. We learned to use the time at work to our advantage. We cleaned ourselves and used the facilities whenever the opportunity arose during working hours.

Back in our quarters, we were given a slice of black bread and some black coffee made of burned grain at 7 a.m. Polish and German foremen appeared to claim their number of laborers. Only those who had worked during the previous night were allowed to remain. About 1 p.m., all returned to quarters to break for lunch. Again, as for breakfast, a few guys were picked to go to the kitchen to bring back buckets of soup. We lined up for it and each one received a liter of potato soup which was more water than soup. Since hunger was already very prevalent, some, at great risk, took the chance of getting in line again. Those recognized by the Werkschutz wound up getting beaten up. However, there were those who succeeded in getting a second serving. In those days I learned that hunger overcomes even the fear of death. At 2 p.m. all those who had come to the quarters for lunch were required to report back to their jobs. Although most of them did return, some must have remained behind. For the German and Polish foremen came up to the quarters screaming insults. Not knowing who was who, they picked whoever was first in line, disregarding the pleas of those who had worked during the night. At night, when the night shift was called to report to work, the same problem arose and again, those in the front lines were picked regardless of when and how long they had worked. Even those who were left in the quarters for the night were not sure of being left alone till morning. It

depended strictly on the number of freight trains which came in during the night. It soon became apparent that in order to survive one must try to work as little as possible. There were some who were capable of positioning themselves in such a way that they escaped working most of the time. The majority, however, worked and worked very hard indeed, from twelve to fifteen to twenty hours a day.

Each day, at 7 o'clock in the evening, all the inmates were assembled and lined up in one of the plant's empty halls which was waiting for new machinery. Surrounded by the Werkschutz, German and Polish foremen, the SS captain, commander of the plant and master of life and death appeared again to inspect us and for a roll call. The mere sight of him sent shivers through the body. A deadly silence embraced the assembled as he passed by. The silence was broken by his voice alone. The roll call was only a check of numbers to make sure that nobody of us disappeared. He required us, however, to scream out in military fashion. Then he repeated the game of hats on and off in unison until we were completely exhausted, all along jeering and making fun of us. At the end he picked from among us those he felt incapable of doing anymore work and those he simply disliked. Some were shot, but most were sent back to the transit center, the Metalurgia plant, for deportation. Finally, we were returned to our quarters where we received a slice of bread and coffee. Thereafter, many, including myself, departed for more work, while the rest remained in the quarters, retiring for the night.

That night I was assigned to unload a freight car loaded with thin sheets of steel. I had no gloves and none were provided. As a result, I cut my hands repeatedly. My hands bleeding, hungry and exhausted, I was so disgusted that when I finished the unloading of the steel and was led to a new assignment, I remained with two other guys behind. We made our way to where the potatoes

were stored. We stole as many as we could carry with us, and entered a still empty shop. We soon discovered that each building was equipped with steam for heating as well as industrial use. That night we had a ball for we steamed potatoes, ate ourselves full and rested, although constantly at the risk of being discovered and killed. Before daybreak we made our way back to the trains and joined the working groups and from there were sent back to our quarters. This was approximately a typical day in this labor camp.

It was hell every minute and I had a feeling that I should never be able to settle down to accept it nor live in it. Three days later, those of us who used to work at Hasag Rakow, before the liquidation of the ghetto, were told to assemble in the morning in a separate group for we would be escorted to work over there. I felt a sigh of relief and I immediately joined the group for Rakow, convincing my two neighbors to come along. In contrast to the Hasag plant, which was still in the formative stages and had almost no outside Polish help, the Rakow plant was an established steel plant with many departments and shops stretching on a wide area and worked by the pre-war Polish employees and laborers. Under the guard of the Werkschutz from Rakow, which seemed to be more liberal, we marched for about an hour to reach the plant. There we were distributed in different shops, supplementing the Polish workers.

To go there every day, although under constant guard and subject to the caprice of the Polish foremen and of Poles in general, who did not exactly love us, I nevertheless felt an easing of the shackles by walking through the city every day for two hours and leaving this horrible, nasty, and hell-filled atmosphere at least for the day. It renewed my contact with the world, however slight, and it gave me an opportunity to exchange my own or my friends' personal effects, such as clothing and valuables, with the Poles for food. During the lunch break we were given, like all other workers, a soup which was much better and more

nourishing than we received at Peltzery which had been made strictly for us. Thus, I was again free of starvation and had a chance even to help our friends at the Peltzery plant who had not been as lucky, by sharing with them whenever possible. To go to work at Rakow was advantageous in many ways. But it also meant four additional roll calls. For those remaining at Peltzery there was only one roll call in the evening under the supervision of the plant SS commander to which we were subject. Every morning we were counted out by the Peltzery Werkschutz and turned over to the Rakow Werkschutz as their responsibility. At Rakow, the SS plant commander counted us again upon arrival in the morning and again in the evening made sure that the exact number was there for return to Peltzery. As we were divided up into different work details in the plant, one was chosen from each detail to be responsible with his life for the group. On return in the evening we were counted again as we were turned over to the Peltzery Werkschutz.

Work at Rakow did not, however, relieve us from the frequent night calls to unload freight cars. As time went on, and the Peltzery Werkschutz discovered that we were bringing in food for our friends, they harrassed us, searching us, and, in most cases, confiscated the food. The daily movement outside the walls of the Peltzery made also possible, however unorganized, a certain contact among all the different Jewish labor forces in the city. Sometimes we exchanged members with other groups we met but we had to be very careful that the numbers were always right, coming or going to Rakow. This gave us an opportunity to learn what was going on in the other camps and about the rest of our people. We did, for example, soon discover that the SS, was clearing a much-abbreviated ghetto, closing it off with barbed wire, to which the remainder of us would be brought back. It would be used as a camp, under SS supervision, from which the needs of the Germans for Jewish free labor will be served. This interchange

was a risky proposition and many of those brave young boys later became the nucleus of the underground, helping many to settle in hideouts and still others to join the partisans in the forests.

One episode that happened to me in one of those interchanges stuck in my mind and I shall treasure for the rest of my life, occurred between me and my brother, who was in the custody of the German air force. One morning, as we were being escorted to work at Rakow we noticed a group of Jews under escort coming from the opposite direction towards us. Although meeting other Jewish labor groups was quite frequent, I never in my wildest dreams thought to come in contact with my brother. As the column approaching us came closer and the uniforms of the guards became clearer, it became certain that the group was working for the Luftwaffe. I trembled for a second and felt my heartbeat accelerate for I was sure to meet my brother for the first time since our separation at Metalurgia several weeks ago. It was a cold fall morning and everybody was dressed as heavily as possible. More and more as we were coming closer, the excitement within me grew. "One more intersection and hopefully they won't turn there. Intersection passed and now, it is certain, will my brother be there? Very soon I shall find out." We are actually rubbing shoulders with them. I looked hard to find my brother as we were passing by. Before I could even locate him, and despite the guards' separation of the two groups, my brother was already all over me, kissing and hugging me. The air force guards were more liberal than even the Rakow Werkschutz, who, next to the Peltzery Werkschutz, were considered lenient, allowed us a few seconds. My brother informed me that they were treated fairly well and that soon they were to be transferred to the small ghetto, which was being organized. He also told me that our father had been sent out everyday from the Metalurgia

for work, but that on one of the frequent selections he had been picked for deportation to Treblinka and was probably, like mother and sister, no longer among the living. I was very sad hearing of my father's brutal end for had I harbored, however slight, the hope that a miracle spare his life, at least for the time being. I, in turn, told my brother of the terrible conditions at Peltzery and that there was no hope for the present that we too would be transferred to the ghetto. Finally, as we were bidding each other good bye, he noticed my cap was torn, whereupon he picked it off my head and exchanged it with his own, which was a new, warm, winter hat, and ran back to his group. This meeting was a highly emotional one to me and has remained fixed in my mind to this day.

For days I cried over the loss of my father and was terror-stricken THAT I MIGHT LOSE MY BROTHER TOO, IT MATTERED LITTLE THAT I TRIED TO NOT THINK ABOUT IT, YET at the thought kept coming back time and again. On top of it all, the hours THOUGH and days seemed to be standing still. Not that the days that followed were any different from the previous but, just like the very ill in the dark of the night, waiting for daybreak to bring them relief, our hope lay in the future, however disappointing and frustrating it might prove to be.

Thus, tormented mentally and abused physically, the majority of us, nevertheless, fell into the routine. Very few would have given in or broken down under the strain simply of work. However, our masters for the sake of excitement, killed and tortured a few of us every day. One night for example a few days after I met my brother, after a hard day of work at Rakow and after the daily parade and inspection before the plant SS commander with all its abuses, degradations, segregations and killings, we finally retired to our allotted sleeping places on the floor. As usual, there was some conversation amongst us exchanging experiences of the day as well as an exchange

of general news. I engaged the two brother friends whom I mentioned before in a silent (whispered) conversation until I fell asleep. Late into the night I was awakened like the rest of the people by shots fired towards us into the floor. They were followed by an outcry of pain and constant groaning from one hit by the bullet. Apparently, the Werkschutz guarding us at the door could not stand our peaceful sleep while he was awake and started himself a little game of excitement by shooting at us. When the neighbors of the victim tried to help they were prevented by the Werkschutz, under the threat of more shooting, from so doing. The poor guy who was hit suffered many hours before he died. During those hours he begged for help. But the Werkschutz was unmoved. Before the end he asked those who knew him to inform his brother, who was in a different work group, about his misfortune.

The Werkschutz had accomplished his objective for I do not believe any of us slept anymore the rest of the night. In the morning the neighbors of the dead man were made to clean up the floor and wash the walls of the stream of blood and to remove the body. The Werkschutz, an 18 year old Volkesdeustch, brazen and full of hatred, bragged all morning: "I killed a Jew -- I killed a parasite. I shall get a medal and reward."

Another example of how insignificant and cheap our lives were was an episode that took place one evening as we were assembled in front of the gate of the Rakow plant after a day of labor prior to being excorted for the night to the Pletzery plant. As usual, the designated Jewish foreman of each department formed his group, counted his men and then waited for the recount by the Werkschutz. On this particular evening, a commotion was evident in one of the groups. It soon became clear that one of the groups was missing

an inmate. The foreman of that group counted and counted again to no avail. He knew who the missing man was but this could be no help to him now. He walked around as if in a daze, inquiring who had seen the missing man last. As the news spread we all stood there electrified. Will the plant commander make good his threat and kill the Jewish foreman or will he spare the man's life? Soon the commander appeared and, cursing insults, asked several questions of the Jewish foreman, who, in a pleading voice, asked his mercy, explaining that he could not watch all the men the way they were spread around on different jobs. After a few seconds he gave the order "Shoot the Pig!" Immediately, a couple Werkschutz approached the foreman, grabbed him and forced him towards the wall near the gate. Again he pleaded with them to spare his life and again they showed their contempt. Whereupon the young Jewish martyr made the last step towards the wall and turned around facing us and the three Werkschutz who were getting ready to fire their rifles. He stood erect there like a giant. His last words were Shema Israel as the order to fire was given. He did not finish the sentence before he was dead.

That night we returned to the Peltzery our ranks shrunk by two. The news had reached us that the escapee had been recognized and killed on the outskirts of the city. Such was the lot of the Jews at Peltzery who were fortunate enough to escape the initial deportations. In the meantime, however slowly, time moved on.

The "small Ghetto", to which all the laborers who at present were being held at various places, would eventually be transferred, ^{was} as taking shape. Only a fraction of the people who used to be in the Metalurgia plant was left. They were helping in setting up the "small Ghetto", removing the dead and in the initial clearing of the abandoned houses in the former "big Ghetto." The complete removal of Jewish property and goods, the sorting, assembly and shipment to

Germany would take months. The majority of the Jews of Czestochowa had already been deported to Treblinka. We hoped that the hunger of the beast for his victim had been stilled, at least temporarily. And we had therefore hoped to have seen the last of the deportations. But this was not to be the case. One evening, as we returned from Rakow to Peltzery, rather than being counted for accuracy and allowed to go to our quarters and thereafter called for the usual major inspection with the rest of the inmates, we were immediately ushered in to one of the vacant halls, where those working in Peltzery were already assembled and waiting. The SS chief appeared and immediately selected almost one third of our group. At the time we did not know what it all meant, which was the right group to be in and whether or not the division meant that the smaller group would be transferred to a different place of work, which was preferable than staying at Peltzery.

This episode had a personal touch for me. For, as I was standing in line, next to me were the two brothers whom I mentioned before and who were very close to me. In fact, we were drawn together like brothers. The SS chief suddenly pointed to the younger brother of the two, who was short in height, to move over to the other group. The older brother, instinctively, not willing to be separated, joined him in the other group. For a moment I had a desire to follow him. But when I noticed the ease with which one could go over to the other side without the interference of the guards, I had a feeling that I had better stay where I was. When the selection was over we went back to our quarters and the other group was not even allowed to take their few personal belongings with them. They were escorted away. The next morning, on the way to Rakow, we found out that they had joined a deportation transport to Treblinka. Thus I was saved again. But fate was not that kind to my dear friends.

In the beginning of 1943, the "small Ghetto", also called the labor camp, was fully completed and some working groups had already been quartered there. Many other labor groups were daily being transferred there. Of the original 60,000 Jewish people, only 7,000 eventually made their way to the small ghetto, 5,000 officially. The remainder were those who had been able to hide outside the ghetto during the deportations, escapees from transports and such others, who, by sheer luck, in spite of all the searches, had never been discovered. Among them were some older men, women and some children.

The "small Ghetto" consisted of about three streets adjoining the Warta River, inclosed with barbed wire and guarded by Ukranian SS who took part in the deportations. Internally, the "small Ghetto" was under a Jewish administration, responsible to the Germans, whose functions were rather of camp administration. It had to deal with quarters for the inmates, kitchen, medical care for the sick, work inside the ghetto, and other tasks the Germans might assign them from time to time.

The people in the ghetto were awakened at six o'clock every morning and an hour later were formed in groups at the gate of the ghetto and escorted to their places of labor. There were those who worked at night. These left the ghetto as the morning shifts were returning. There was an early curfew in the evening. Those remaining in the ghetto at any time for that matter had to be able to explain their presence during the frequently conducted searches by the Gestapo. While many labor groups were being transferred to the small chetto, we in the Peltzery were also looking forward for that day. For us who worked at Rakow it meant that we would no longer be subject to the rigors of Peltzery. We would be escorted from the ghetto directly to Rakow. Those who worked at Peltzery were hoping for the relief they would get, at least at night,

when shifted to the ghetto. So we thought. However, one day, the Rakow group, as we were called at Peltzery, were told that there was no longer any need for us at the Rakow plant. That, instead, we would stay here and be assigned jobs here. Now we were even more desperate to return to the ghetto, and I felt this a blow to my hopes to soon be reunited with my brother, who was already quartered in the small ghetto.

In the meantime, the Hasag Rakow plant was getting its favored labor from the ghetto and it was very doubtful that our group would ever be reinstated as Rakow labor when we eventually were returned to the ghetto. I was now assigned to the generator section of the Peltzery plant, which had become operational while I was going daily to Rakow. It was a big hall converted into a machine shop. My job was to knock the metal on a certain part used for generators, thin and even. The generators were used for trucks and cars and designed to use wood and coal instead of gasoline. The work was not hard but very monotonous and while at work I really was not bothered by anybody.

The days and nights, nevertheless, seemed eternal. Then, after several weeks, after all Jewish labor groups had long since been quartered in the "Small Ghetto", and we had completely lost hope that we would be allowed to join them, we were given the good news of the date of our transfer to the ghetto. We were all satisfied that we would shortly be leaving this place, if only for the nights, and again be sleeping in beds rather than on the floor. Our attitude, however, was of a wait-and-see nature. Two days later, after completion of work, we were indeed given orders to pack our few personal belongings and fall in to move to the ghetto. Pack on back, true to the concept of the wandering Jew, we were on the march again. Our hope, now as in the past rekindled that perhaps now, with only a few Jews left, that we would be

allowed to work, work that the Germans needed so desperately, at least until we are completely exhausted. And perhaps the downfall of the beast would come before our exhaustion, and we would survive.

To reach the "small Ghetto" we had to move through our former ghetto, which was still uninhabited and at this time of night, especially uninviting. We passed my house which brought tears to my eyes and pain to my heart. Obviously, I was not alone. The wounds were too fresh for everyone. When we reached the barbed wire and the gate of the ghetto, which had been erected at the end of Nadrzeczna Street and Rynek Warszawski the place was surrounded with Ukranian SS, Polish police and Gestapo. We were counted by the SS at the gate, whereupon our Werkschutz escort from the Peltzery plant left us and we were turned over to the Jewish administration of the ghetto for relocation.

My brother was already waiting at the gate and our reunion again caused many a tear. He wanted me to come to stay with him, which I desired to do very much. However, the people in charge, in spite of our pleas, insisted that I must be assigned quarters with my group, at least for the time being, and that I should be able to join my brother shortly. I was then assigned a room with three other guys in the apartment of my former friend Itzhak Gutenberg's parents, with whom I had attended school and with whom I had spent many happy hours in this apartment. I knew every inch of this house as I knew my own. Naturally, this apartment brought back many memories, happy and sad. But my dear friend Itzhak was gone and dead, killed in the early days of the deportation. His parents, his eight brothers and sisters, like all the rest of the Jews, were all gone. The bed I was to sleep in was that of my friends.

I did not easily fall asleep that first night in the ghetto. My friend, his parents, his brothers, his sisters, the Sabbaths I once witnessed here, were all torturing my mind. The following morning we were awakened for bread

and coffee in the ghetto kitchen after which I joined my group at the gate where the Peltzery Werkschutz were already waiting to escort us to work. Again we passed through the abandoned streets of the "old Ghetto", and again I had a chance to glimpse the house in which I was born and reared, except this time I glared at it in broad daylight. It seemed as though it was joining me in weeping everytime I passed over the loss of its dear inhabitants just as close relatives carry on over the loss of a dear one. It seemed as though it was pleading like a child abandoned, facing an uncertain future.

Here and there a Jewish labor detail under the supervision of a German was removing furniture or other items. There were now stories abounding, told by members of labor details, of the martyrdom of many who had hidden themselves in the houses, yards and attics after the deportation. Stories especially about children whose parents had hidden them before they had left themselves, or old men and women who likewise had been hidden because they could not walk. In most instances they were discovered by the Jewish workers, exhausted from hunger, thirst and fear. The Jewish laborers tried to help them, endangering themselves in the process, but only a few were saved. Most were discovered by the Germans and their henchmen and murdered brutally. The scenes of frightened young children and old men and women pleading for their lives did not deter these devils in experimentation in brutal murder.

We also passed through the city itself on our way to the Peltzery plant. Just as on normal mornings in the past, stores and business establishments were opening up, men were hurrying to work, children to school, and others were just taking a stroll. I observed no change here because of what had happened and was still happening to the Jews in the ghetto. At Peltzery I still worked at the generators section. The only change that occurred here

was that the daily inspection and parade was moved to an earlier hour prior to leaving the plant for the ghetto. Although not as lengthy and dangerous as when we were quartered there, it was something that all dreaded and, so far as we knew, was only practiced in this plant. I started to make plans then to transfer, as soon as possible, quarters in the ghetto to those of my brother and to join the work detail to Hazag Rakow. After about a week in the ghetto I was able, with the consent of the Jewish ghetto administration, to join my brother Shlomo and, a few days later, completely break off with working at Peltzery and join the work detail going to Rakow.

For the first time since the deportations I felt a little more relaxed. The chief of German Werkschutz who was in charge of our escort to and from Rakow, whose name I forget, seemed to show some sympathy to us. So, a more relaxed atmosphere prevailed while we were in transit under his jurisdiction. He went as far as allowing some to get out of the group while passing through the Aryan side in order to buy certain things or to deliver a message. I do not believe that I ever saw him hitting anybody, which is quite remarkable considering that this was part of the daily routine and something we had accepted as fact and learned to live with.

In the plant itself the atmosphere was also more relaxed than at Peltzery. However, the opportunities of doing less than a full job once one was assigned was also very remote for work here was in most cases more of an assembly nature. The possibility of securing additional food above the regular ration, was quite good. This atmosphere made it a very desirable place to be assigned to. In the evening I had now an opportunity to spend all my time with my brother Shlomo. We ate together, slept together and shared everything we had. In fact, we became so drawn together that life without one another became unthinkable. After

his transfer to the ghetto he no longer worked for the German Luftwaffe. Instead he returned to his old job on the railroad. Thus a new routine for ghetto life was taking shape and again with it, owing to the critical need of our labor for the German war machine, our hopes increased that with some luck we might have a chance for survival.

In the evening the ghetto kitchen became more than just a place where one ate. It became a meeting place for friends where news of the day was exchanged. Of main importance and concern was any act of the Germans in the ghetto or in the working places that might reveal their intentions towards us. Every actual or rumored success of the Allies was told and retold and its importance made relevant to our plight completely out of proportion. In most cases, although these successes were important to the conduct of the war and were spelling the eventual collapse of Germany, they were nevertheless of little help to us. In a way we acted like a very sick man, who was critically ill and yet hoped for a miracle. We practically refused to face reality. But there were those who, while most were merely hoping, were actively engaged in preparation for the last stand. Their heroism is beyond any description. For they gathered arms, trained the most dedicated, and assembled a network of bunkers under the most impossible and dangerous conditions. Although some contact with the Polish underground was indispensable, even for a suicidal stand, their cooperation was expensive. For in most cases every gun and every bullet had to be paid for.

In one of those kitchen encounters the word spread that a man who had been deported with one of the transports, had spent time in Treblinka. He had eventually been able to evade the guards and all the many obstacles that stood in his way to flee Treblinka and to return to the ghetto. He told of

his experiences and closed with a stern warning that our survival was very unlikely and that we had an obligation to revenge our loved ones. He described Treblinka as a small village between Warsaw and Bialystok. Not far from the village was a thick forest from which the inhabitants of Treblinka used to cut the trees for heating their houses and cooking their meals. In 1941, the Nazis ordered the forest cleared and erected in its place the now infamous extermination camp. The camp was thickly surrounded with barbed wire and hidden from the outside world by the forest trees and by bushes especially thickly planted for this purpose. In a short time they had built there thirteen huge gas chambers for the sole purpose of exterminating our already hard-trying Jewish people.

They had also built a special railroad track that brought the victims into camp. There the arrivals were met by the SS, Ukrainians, and Jewish labor groups. The Jewish labor group was forced to help in the dirty work of facilitating a speedy disembarkation of the victims, removal of their belongings and of the dead bodies of those who had not survived the trip. In order to save transport facilities the Germans overcrowded the freight cars with the condemned, making it impossible even for mothers to nurse their babies resulting in many deaths in the course of the twenty hour journey.

In the meantime, another labor group was already lining up the men separate from the women and children. They were ordered to undress by the SS, after which the men were made to carry all the clothing and shoes to separate stacks while the women and children were led away in the nude by armed Ukrainians to have their hair cut. Afterwards, they were driven to the so-called showers which in reality were gas chambers.

All this was done with lightning speed and precision our informer revealed. To confuse the victims the murderers kept up a constant tumultuous noise hitting the victims, whose anguish, outcries and screams, only added to the victims' own disorientation. During the time that our man was in Treblinka, he saw three to four transports a day arrive and the extermination of between six to eight thousand Jews a day.

From each transport they picked a number of Jews for the labor groups, among which was a group that sorted out the clothing, the shoes, the valuables and other personal effects, including gold fillings and dentures. It was from this group that most of the escapees came for they were entrusted with loading the cars with the sorted goods for Germany. It was from this group that some took the chance in hiding in the stacks of clothing until they were out of Treblinka. The labor groups were constantly in need of replacements for the attrition was indeed very high. The shooting and killing was constant and many of the inmates actually welcomed death rather than be used as tools in the murder of their own people. It was the frustration in the Jewish labor groups from which eventually came a bloody uprising which resulted in burning down of the installation as well as the death of most of the heroes, but only after a whole people were almost completely destroyed.

Our escapee only confirmed what most of us had suspected and what many of us went on denying to ourselves. Thus existence in the "small Ghetto" had its many complexities. Aside from having to worry about supplementing the starvation diet and avoiding hard physical labor so as not to become exhausted physically, one had also to be on constant guard against the daily thirst of the SS for victims. It actually necessitated acrobatic manoeuvres to avoid being hit. On top of this, the baggage of trauma that each one of

us carried because of past and recent experiences and the uncertain future, was in itself quite an order to deal with. In normal times it is totally unimaginable even for the most sound in mind and spirit to be able to deal with such overwhelming odds, much less withstand them. But these were not normal times nor were we, at this point, normal people. Most of us were stubbornly clinging to life, determined to overcome and survive our enemy.

By March, 1943, the "small Ghetto" had been in existence only a few months and I had been there even less, and yet it seemed that I have been there a very long time. In spite of all the trials and tribulations I thanked God every day for being together with my brother and prayed that this status should lead to an improvement of our lot and to an eventual liberation. But the Germans had other plans in store for us.

On March 20, 1943, the ghetto was rocked by Gestapo's rounding up the Judenrat under orders from Degenhart who had been responsible for the liquidation of the "big Ghetto." The Judenrat, the doctors, and the remaining intelligensia with their families, were called up for a so-called "trip to Palestine." As was always the case in all the actions, the Germans never failed to disguise them at worst as something less than death and at best as some kind of an improvement of the existing conditions. In this particular case they called it the trip to Palestine so that the victims would assume that they were being exchanged for German nationals caught by the war in Palestine.

It did not take long for the victims, as well as for the rest of the ghetto inmates, to discover where the trip was taking them. As soon as they reached the outside of the ghetto gate they were packed into a truck under exceptionally heavy guard and transported to the Jewish cemetery. There they were made to dig their own graves and then shot. Over a hundred people,

including ten children, were killed mercilessly and in cold blood on that fateful day. The remaining shreds of our hope for survival suffered a heavy blow.

Talk of a final stand to die with dignity was on the lips of everybody. But only a few actively prepared for that day. Two days later, on March 22, I personally was visited by misfortune again. On that day I lost all that I held most dear and all that was left to me of my family. On that day I lost my dear brother Shlomo and I was not even there to witness it. The day had started as usual. We got up together, and went to the ghetto kitchen to get our ration of black coffee and a slice of bread. We came back to the house where we ate breakfast which usually consisted of the ration plus supplemental food that we had been able to organize for ourselves. Over breakfast we still talked, as we usually did, over the events of the past two days, and speculated about what the Germans might do next. He seemed to emphasize that day his belief that our fate was sealed and that, therefore, the only valuable contribution we could make was to see to it that we took as many Germans with us as possible when the end came. Although forceful in his convictions, he never for a moment gave me an idea that he was already actively engaged in this endeavor and I never pursued the discussion further. We walked to the ghetto gate together where we parted, I joining my group for Hasag Rakow, and he the railroad group.

This was the last time I saw him. Although I had always had this dreadful fear that I might lose my brother and be left alone, I never admitted it and tried to keep the thought out of my mind. For I had also hoped that when the end came it would come for both of us together. At work on that day I was with others removing finished railroad tracks from one place to another and

and the Polish foreman was especially hard on me. He hit me several times for not running fast enough and, at the same time, not sparing any insults against the Jewish people. On that day, to him, I was the embodiment of the laziness of all the Jewish people, who lived as parasites off the Polish folks, - but no more, - for Hitler is changing all that. I had the choice of answering in kind and being killed. Little did I know then that my brother was being executed, probably at that very time, for I would have been unable to control myself and thus have invited my own destruction. Instead, I grit my teeth, thinking that the day, as any other before, would come to an end and I would go back to the ghetto and to the warmth of my brother. And tomorrow would be a new day and a new beginning and hopefully a better day.

When I came home to the ghetto that day, naturally depressed and tired, and hoping to share with my brother my anxieties of the day as we usually did and draw renewed strength from one another, he was not home. At first I thought that his group was late in coming home that day as I had not seen any of his group who also lived in the same building. Later, however, his friend came in to break the terrible news of the execution of a number of boys, including my brother, for sabotage activity. He told me that Shlomo, together with a group of others, had dismantled the tracks at several places to cause a German train to derail. Unfortunately, their mission was unsuccessful for it caused no casualties in German life or property. Thus, however well intentioned and motivated my brother had been, his death, to me, was in vain, and at best not more than a symbol of resistance. His body, together with the bodies of the rest of the victims, his friend further related, had been moved to the Jewish cemetery for burial.

The shock and grief that overtook me as I listened to his friend is beyond description. I became completely numb and shed no tears. I could not utter

a word. My companion, noticing my total immobility, tried to console me and urged me not to give up. Since you are the only one left of your family as I am, he said, it is now even more important that you persevere and try to survive. My brother's friend left and I lay down on the bed that I used to share with Shlomo and, for several hours, I lay there and stared at the ceiling. The people sharing the room with me, mindful of my plight, left me alone. When I finally came back to full consciousness, I broke out with such cries, tears, and anguish, that, for hours, I had my head buried under the pillow, not allowing anybody to come close to me. I do not remember ever, before or after, shedding as many tears. The following day I did not go to work nor get out of the house in spite of the knowledge that I could be discovered and killed. Fortunately for me, nothing happened. But I had some time for thought. Again, the desire for life, which is strong in most human beings, took hold, reinforced by the thought that survival was a must for every Jew and for me for the sake of my dear family. With my positive thinking back, I returned to work, and my daily endeavors for survival. But it took me a long time before I recovered from the shock of losing my brother.

With every passing day, the excesses of the German grew in intensity. Whether because of the reverses they were suffering on all fronts which caused the luster of their early victories to pale, or simply because of adherence to an earlier established timetable for our destruction, the results were the same. But we were mindful that the Germans were beginning to falter and definite signs began to appear that it was only a matter of time before Nazi Germany would be overwhelmed by the allies. Thus our desire for survival grew stronger but, under the conditions of systematic daily killings, also more doubtful. As a result, both forces of resignation and revenge grew

steadily. The vast majority however, did not think in terms of military resistance and heroism. Rather, they tried to overcome each day, hoping for the best against all odds. I must admit that I personally had a strange feeling that, because of my survival so far, I would somehow persevere to the very end. I was then jockeying for position daily, avoiding encounters with Germans, Werkshutz or supervisors, making my being felt and visible as little as possible. I was fortunate in being able, even after the loss of my brother, to continue to supplement my diet and not to be forced to do hard labor. This state of affairs, however tough, was still too normal a situation for the Gestapo to allow to continue for a long time.

On June 25, 1943, only three months after the Germans killed my brother, Degenhart and his henchmen, with the help of the army, began the liquidation of the "small Ghetto." When it actually began, in the afternoon of that day, I was with my group at work at Hasag Rakow. As we heard it later, even though the fate of the ghetto had been predetermined it was the fact that the Germans discovered the underground tunnel, uniforms and ammunition, that may have speeded up its destruction. They went directly to the tunnel that led to the bunker on Nadrzeczna St. 82. They sprayed the tunnel with grenades which caught the brave defenders off guard. A small battle nonetheless ensued but Degenhart and his murderers emerged victorious, killing most of the defenders. Only a few survived, making their way eventually towards the outside of the "small Ghetto" and joining the partisans roaming the forests.

With the resistance crushed Degenhart proceeded to burn down the "small Ghetto", a process which lasted several days. Eight hundred Jews lost their lives, either in battle or at the Jewish cemetery where they had to dig their own graves before they were shot. An eye witness described the mass

graves as soaked with rivers of blood which made the ground lift up for a time until the blood froze. Ironically, and typical of the Germans, was the last act of Degenhart in his destruction of the "small Ghetto." He assembled all the Jewish policemen with their families to thank them for their service and telling them that their mission had ended and that from here on they would become workers of Hasag Peltzery. However, except for a few, and those workers were detained to clean up the "small Ghetto", none made it to Hasag Peltzery or to Rakow. The rest were driven to the Jewish cemetery and there, together with their families, brutally executed.

Again, I was spared the agony of watching the destruction of the ghetto. For when the day of the liquidation started we were detained at work and quartered there in barracks previously prepared, most probably for this purpose. We were never again returned to the "small Ghetto." We nevertheless stayed very close to the news coming out of the "small Ghetto" in those fateful days. We prayed, although hopelessly, for the survival of the defenders and most of the remaining inmates, and looked for signs of the intentions of Germans towards us once the ghetto was liquidated. On the second day of the liquidation a shipment of bedding and clothing for us arrived from the ghetto, accompanied by a group of survivors to join us at Rakow. The goal of the Gestapo to make the city of Czestochowa, which for centuries had a large and vibrant Jewish population, "Judenrein", or free of Jews had at last become fact.

Inside the factory of Hasag Rakow, away from the different plants, on an empty lot facing the road to the main gate a huge barrack, complete with bunks, was erected in the spring of 1943. Next to it, and separated from it, forming an L-shape, a much smaller barrack which looked like office space and warehouse was built. When we saw this being erected little did we think that we might be

staying in those barracks. But when the "small Ghetto" was liquidated we were retained at the factory and the barracks suddenly became home to us. The first night, because of the suddenness of our detention, and having nothing except the clothing on our backs, and no blankets or bedding available, we spent the time resting rather than sleeping on the bunks. Besides, the knowledge of what was going on in the "small Ghetto" and uncertainty of the future made sleep impossible. In the days ahead, however, as the small ghetto was being destroyed, bedding and clothing arrived from there and was distributed to us.

Upon completion of the liquidation and destruction of the "small Ghetto", a number of men who had helped in cleaning the area and a couple of former policemen arrived at Hasag Rakow and ~~we~~ were attached to our group. With them also came Dr. Glatter who afterwards set up a camp dispensary. The Germans and the Werkshutz immediately proceeded to erect a barbed wire fence around the barracks allowing inside enough space for roll calls and to make it a good-sized camp. They also built a swinging gate of barbed wire which was guarded by the Werkshutz day and night. Thus our incarceration became complete except for the time we spent working. We were now under the complete jurisdiction of the German plant commander and the Werkshutz, except of course for the overall official German policy of dealing with the remainder of the Jews. In the beginning of this new state we were very apprehensive that any day soon the Germans might remove us and kill us. We watched with suspicion every move of the Werkshutz and our Polish supervisors and foremen. We tried at all times as much as possible to stay out of the enclosure. We tried to stay in the plant, even when not working, where disappearance if necessary could be possible. A stringent daily count of all the inmates and a roll call in the presence of the German camp commander or his deputy was being enforced. Fortunately,

however, these roll calls, like the ones held when I was at Peltzery, were not as vicious and harassing.

In time, our suspicions abated somewhat due to the shortage of labor that the Germans were experiencing, which was creating a need for us, and also because of the relaxed atmosphere. Except for the usual insults and occasional harrassments, they seemed to be interested mainly in our labors and less in the political aspect of our existence. There were only a couple of instances, to my knowledge, of the shooting of an inmate by the Werkshutz during the year and a half that I was at Rakow, for which attempted escape was the reason. The casualties we sustained were mostly due to the hard and dangerous work.

Our diet consisted of a slice of black bread and coffee in the morning and a soup in the evening. The main kitchen of the plant did the cooking for us as it did for the Polish employees. However, ours was brought over to the camp and distributed there. We were not allowed in the kitchen mess hall as the rest of the workers. But, most of us managed to get one or two soups during the day or night while working. Although not abundantly fed for this kind of work, most of us were not hungry while at Hasag Rakow. After several weeks in this new environment, either working or restricted to the camp area, with the short-lived "small Ghetto" and its terrible end fading into the past, this new life somehow ^{ASSUMED} ~~ensured~~ a status of normalcy. It may sound insane to call our existence normal while we were totally imprisoned, at the disposal of our masters 24 hours a day and otherwise allowed to live only as long as it suited their fancy. Nevertheless, considering the relative calm here, next to Hasag Peltzery which was a complete hell, and the consistent daily routine which very seldom changed, it appeared to us as a change to normal.

With every passing day my hopes, and the hopes of the rest, began to rise that our destruction was not inevitable. With the approach of fall, after having been there for several months, which seemed more like years, we were hoping and praying that our removal from here would be to complete freedom. As the weather got colder and more inclement, the inside of the barrack felt good. For our barrack was heated from the plant boilers, while in the "big Ghetto" and the "small Ghetto" keeping warm in the winter had been a tremendous problem. There had been no allowance for coal or wood or any other heating substance for Jews. Thus, when the furniture was burned up, we had simply been freezing.

In the plant the Polish employees, although hostile to us by nature, by rubbing shoulders and working with us daily got used to us and tolerated us. One of their anti-semitic beliefs, nurtured over a lifetime, that Jews cannot do hard work, must have been dispelled by our performance. But they would never admit it. However, there were some of them who quietly sympathized with us and, at least to us, condemned the atrocities committed on us. There were a few who tried to help by sharing their food with us or otherwise to encourage and strengthen us. These beautiful people I shall never forget, especially since they were so few in that sea of total indifference. If, since being camped here, our lives for a change became less eventful, which we welcomed, the same could not be said about Jews still remaining in other places in Poland, in Europe, and even in our sister camp Peltzery, in Czestochowa.

By the end of 1943, the destruction of Jews in the gas chambers and crematoria was still in full swing. But so also were the German reverses. In the East the Russians were returning the favor in dealing with the Germans and the German captives. The Germany army was in full retreat. Their armies

were suffering one defeat after another. In North Africa, after the U.S. joined the British forces there, the German resistance collapsed and the German North African Corps under Rommell surrendered. North Africa was now completely in the hands of the allies and the Nazi threat to the Middle East completely removed. In July, 1943, the Allies landed in Southern Italy. Mussolini was then replaced by Marshal Badoglio who, in September, took Italy out of the war.

When the news of this event reached us in September, our morale and hope reached unprecedented heights. We were overjoyed, yet afraid to display our emotions. We ~~were~~ expected that now the German people would come to realize that continuance of the war was to be sheer folly and totally destructive to them. Every morning we waited to hear that Hitler had been deposed, which would have assured our survival. A total war to the end, even though it still held out some hope for our survival, nevertheless meant time for the Germans to complete their job on the Jews. Only an abrupt change in the German regime could have saved us and the many thousands of Jews in Europe now being moved to death camps.

But our wish was not to be fulfilled. Hitler's dictatorship still exerted enough grip to keep Germany in the war. Thus we were waiting in vain. But the news that was coming in daily now warmed the heart, kept the spirit high and left no doubt, regardless of what would happen to us, that Hitler and his henchmen were doomed and that the German people would pay a heavy price for their adventure. By the end of 1943, and during the winter of 1944, I was working at the ovens where the heavy blocks of steel were heated and then moved on for processing as railroad tracks. Owing to the fact that mechanization was very limited most of the operation had to be done manually. The work was very hard and, at the ovens, very hot. The steel blocks in the oven

had to be heated till red and ever so often turned over and helped along on their way from the oven. Two men performed this work by opening a window in the oven and, with a long steel stick, together moving and turning the blocks along. Every time the oven window was opened just to feel the fire hitting my face was enough of a struggle for me. But to do this ten hours a day was even more trying. Other times I was working at the machines which rolled the redhot blocks as they were coming through until they were the finished product; railroad tracks. Hard work, but in time I got used to it and the work did not bother me at all.

During the summer of 1944, I was taken off working at the ovens and at the machines rolling the steel blocks and, instead, given different assignments every day in the department. In a way I was made kind of a relief man and this was a physically less demanding job. This continued for a while until I was attached to a crew of four to clean under the machines when the department was idled for four hours every day for this purpose. The department was on a twenty hour schedule between two shifts of ten hours each. The crew of four did the work between the change of the morning shift to the night shift from 4 P.M. till 8 P.M. This was a relatively easy job which allowed me more time to care for myself and help others. It was a job desired by many and one which my special good relationship with the Jewish foreman helped me to get.

I kept this job until the Germans abandoned the plant and I was deported to Germany. I was fortunate, as were most of us, to secure enough food and thus remain relatively fit physically. ~~But even more important, I became relatively fit physically.~~ But even more important, I became very relaxed and a sense of confidence which I had not experienced since the start of the war, began to slowly return. Daily now the news was bad for the Germans.

In the city of Czestochowa, besides the two existing Hasag plants Rakow and Peltzery, where Jews were camped, another Hasag plant was opened at the former Czestochowianka Plant on Narutowicza St. Jews from another labor camp in Skarzysko were brought in to work at the newest addition. For the people who were moved here from Skarzysko it was indeed a life-saving experience. The conditions of Skarzysko were such that survival was only possible for a short time. They had had to work with poisonous substances, they had been undernourished and cruelly treated.

Some of the Skarzysko people were subsequently transferred to us and we had a chance to hear, as well as see, the marks of their recent plight. Again, they told stories that were similar to those which I had personally experienced at Peltzery. Their attrition from disease, hunger and cold, besides the poisoning and killing, was almost half annually. We tried very hard to shield these newcomers whenever possible from hazardous and heavy jobs. Also, they were favored by the Jewish administration with additional food when leftovers occurred. The Jewish doctor for the camp, Dr. Glatter, undertook a healing effort, even with his limited supplies and space, to raise the health level and the strength of the people from Skarzysko. After a short time, their skins which had become yellow from the chemicals at Skarzysko, returned to normal color and their strength came to par with ours. The Jewish trait of mutual help, even under these trying circumstances, had, as in so many times in the past, triumphed again.

On a couple occasions, individual Jews living in the Aryan side and working in the underground, appeared secretly in the plant and in the camp, keeping in this way contact with the Jewish leaders here. This was very dangerous and could not have taken place without the active support of some of the

Werkschutz. In winter of 1944, and in the early spring of that year, a lot of things looked encouraging. Whereas we were always under maximum security and always searched entering the barrack enclosure, this practice was relaxed to a minimum. The Poles in the plant were now talking of the Russians nearing Warsaw and entertaining hope of an uprising. In June, the Allied armies invaded Normandy and the Russians approached the Vistula River. In July, events culminated with an assassination attempt on Hitler, which, to our sorrow, was unsuccessful.

But nothing could spoil our hope and confidence in survival, despite the disappointment and our great hunger and desire for freedom now. The sun was shining brightly and smiling upon us. The air was different and fresh and we filled our lungs with it. This was indeed our new spring of hope. When the Polish uprising in Warsaw collapsed, in full view of the Red army and without even token intervention on their part, I became fully convinced that power politics was at play and that we would be affected by it. Only an offensive with lightning speed by the Russian Army could remove the threat of our being sent by the Germans to "safer areas." To the Germans we were still most important cargo. The Germans were now removing all Poles from Warsaw and transporting them inside Germany for labor. We could see from a distance railroad freight cars packed with Polish men, women and children under military guard, moving west.

This gave us a clue to what lay ahead for us. Every work day was filled with new developments and, by the end of 1944, the Russian army was on the move again. We now felt that if we were not removed shortly we would be abandoned. In spite of all the new developments the routine in the plant persisted. Chanukah, 1944, at our camp was not a special event, and not even

celebrated quietly although, for the first time since the start of the war, we had no doubts that the badly diminished and terribly battered children of Israel would persist and outlive their present tormentors as they had for generations. The occasion, nonetheless, was not lost on me nor on the other inmates. We reminisced about the beauty of the tradition in prewar Poland as we had celebrated them in our homes. Deep down we could see the renewal giving its first signs of belated appearance. Jewish holidays ever since the occupation had times of agony for us. All the major deportations, massacres and repressions had been inaugurated on the holidays, to add insult to injury. But this did not prevent, at least in the "big Ghetto" Jews assembling in basements, attics and homes, to pray and observe the holidays. However, in the "small Ghetto" and in the camp here, Jewish holidays were no longer observed except on an individual basis. All through our suffering we had never stopped singing. The songs were mostly of the times describing the agony of our people, unhappy but not hopeless.

The Hasag Rakow camp was no exception. In the evenings, we sat in groups discussing events, reminiscing and winding up the evenings with songs. In the beginning we sang very quietly but in 1944 our singing became louder and louder. Our guards not only did not intervene but in many cases encourage and listened in on our singing. The first two weeks of January, 1945, everything continued in the plant and in the camp as usual. The Soviet army was much closer than we had thought possible because of the "business-as-usual" atmosphere. The Polish workers in the plant brought news daily of the Soviet's Army advances but never indicated that they were practically at the gates of the city. Their main hope was that when the Soviets did indeed approach the city, the Germans did not decide on a last stand which would result in the devastation

of the city. Their hope was that the Germans would abandon the city without a fight.

Our concern was not how the city would be surrendered, but whether we would survive a surrender, or be shipped off to Germany just prior to liberation of the city. The days again were filled with fear mixed with hope. Freedom was so near and yet so far, life so almost secure, death so imminent. Which would it be? Everytime we were ordered to assemble we held our breath. At the end of each roll-call and inspection, we felt relief and a new lease on life. Physical torment which had been common to us for so long was replaced by mental torment. The feeling of the majority was that we must not do anything that might jeopardize our lives, especially since we had made it so far. In our discussions and in our spare time, we dreamed that the Russians would encircle and surprise our captors, forcing their surrender and our liberation.

This state of affairs and tension continued till January 16, 1945. The night before, the lights suddenly went out in the plant as well as in the camp. Bombing and movement of planes was heard very close. We were sure that the front was moving nearer to us and calculated that the bombing was intended to soften the German positions before the Soviet attack. But we did not realize that the next 24 hours would determine our fate. In the morning of January 16, 1945, the night shift returned to the barracks and told us of the darkness that had prevailed all night in the plant and that no work had been done. They also related that a great many of the Polish workers had not showed up. Those who did come to work revealed to our friends in the darkness of the night that the Russians were already in the villages to the east of the city, that they might enter the city soon and that they had seen Germans packing and leaving. Some of the friendlier Poles whispered; "your freedom is close."

There were a few from our night group who were missing in the morning, apparently having taken the hint from the Poles and hidden in the plant. The Werkshutz at the gate enclosure did not seem to care for they did not even count the returning night workers. Most of us going to work in the morning were ready to do so but the Werkschutz did not allow anybody out. By eight A.M. the camp became a beehive of discussion. Groups gathered in the yard of the camp as well as in the barracks, speculating as to what would happen next. The news brought by the night shift was already known to everybody and speculations centered around that news. Some claimed that since the Russians were that close, the Germans would be thinking about their own safety rather than about us and will simply abandon us. Others retorted that, apparently, the lesson of the German sense of discipline and duty, even in failure, had ^{not} been forgotten. These pessimists contended, and rightly so, that the Germans would go on doing what they took to be their job to the very end, especially where we Jews were concerned. While most felt deportation to Germany a certainty, there was, simultaneously, fear of our physical destruction as well as hope for instant liberation.

As usual, this morning, we were given our rations of bread and coffee. The sun came out early and it looked like a bright day ahead. For January it was not too cold. In fact, it was very comfortable and pleasant. By twelve or one P.M. our speculation and waiting was over. We were given orders to pack our belongings and assemble. The plant commander and all the Werkschutz came for the last roll call and inspection. They came heavily armed for they too would be leaving their posts after their last functions of ensuring safety for us, their precious cargo, was accomplished. We were told by the plant commander that we were going to march to the STRADOM RAILWAY, WHERE WE WOULD BE loaded into boxcars for labor in Germany. He did not fail to make it clear that any attempt at escape would be dealt with on the spot, by shooting.

Subsequently, we were issued double bread rations and additional clothing and the Werkschutz conducted a last minute check of the barracks for possible hideouts. Obviously, they were aware that a number of inmates were missing but cared little, now, to make much of it. Ordinarily, a few of us would have had to pay with our lives for this "crime." Finally, the Werkschutz, satisfied that nobody was left behind, surrounded us, and under their heavy guard we took our last glances at the place we had called our home for the last year and a half and embarked on a new, uncertain, future and new wanderings.

CHAPTER 2

Buchenwald

We filed out of the camp towards the main gate of the plant. As we marched on I kept looking back to the camp with some sentiment for, in spite of the fact that I had been locked in there a total prisoner, my most tranquil and relatively hunger-free time of the war was also spent there. However, no sooner I was outside the main gate of the plant than I realized that there could be no place in my mind for such sentiments. Mental torture, instead, overtook me, I blamed myself for blowing my best chance for liberty by not endeavoring to remain behind. I should have better sized up the situation and remained in the plant a fortnight ago, I kept telling myself. But what if it takes a few days before the Russians enter the plant and the Germans in the meantime make an intensive search and blow up the plant, I countered in my own dialogue. Whatever the best course for me would have been, the drama was still being played out and at least at this time any course was still a gamble. We marched on and, for the first time in a year and a half, I was again in the street, seeing people passing by on the sidewalks, open stores and buildings with people, who, in spite of the war, seemed to be leading a normal life. How beautiful it would be if I were free rather than under guard, I was thinking to myself.

We were passing a little neighborhood called Stradom on the edge of Czestochowa. Here we passed an exodus of tanks, guns and German army personnel, some of it stalled. In the background, constant detonations, shooting and explosions, were heard. Seeing this, I felt that the Germans were giving up

the city without resistance and that the Russian entry was imminent. It felt like seeing the promised land but not being able to enter it.

Forty-five minutes after we started out we reached a long train of boxcars on a track outside the yards of the Stradom depot where the Werkschutz turned us over to the German Wehrmacht, who were to be responsible for us and escort us to our destination. The Werkschutz in turn departed and joined other Germans flocking to the trains, seeking the last chance of escape. Having been witness before, to people fleeing the oncoming Germans, I felt gratified seeing the shoe on the other foot. I was sure that many would be stranded and pay with their lives while we on the train would have been more than happy to have had them take our places. But no sooner had the German army completed our takeover than we were ordered into the boxcars, packed in like cattle and the doors locked. And inside, no sooner than we had finished situating ourselves to make our voyage as comfortable as possible, did the discussion and second guessing start in earnest.

The overwhelming opinion prevailed that while we were locked up waiting to be shipped out, the Russians were in the process of taking over the city of Czestochowa. Frustration and guilt feeling that we were practically running away from liberty. And then, what next? Was not the risk of being shipped to an extermination camp in Germany higher than the risk of being killed had we resisted deportation. Should we not have just cut the barbed wire and tried to disappear within the plant? All these were questions that we asked one another without an apparent answer. But, hearing the shooting ever closer, which was like good music to our ears, we could not help but continue to hope for our survival.

From the information available to us while still in Rakow, we knew

that the gas chambers in Auschwitz were no longer in operation. Thus we tried to lift our spirits by telling ourselves that this threat to our lives had been removed ~~Should~~ we be sent to Auschwitz. Hope persisted, however, that we would wind up as laborers in Germany and in this way outlast our tormentors to the end of the war. In the meantime, dusk fell, and we heard the German Wehrmacht making ready the train's departure. I now remembered my first voyage in Cattle boxcars to the East in the early stages of the war under SS escort. Although I could never have expected then that my family and most of my people would be obliterated, my feeling then had been one of helplessness and despair. Now I was sure that a complete German defeat was imminent and that even if I should not live to see the end of ^{it} the Jewish people would persist. It was indeed heart warming to watch the members of the "master-race" running with their pants down, dirty, exhausted and scared, indeed, as their so-called inferiors had before them.

The train started to move but very slowly. Seemingly, the train was not completely ready but had to move on to prevent encirclement. After we had moved at this slow pace for a couple hours, the train stopped and we waited again. It was night and we did not know where we were or what was going on. I thought that the Germans must be jockeying the position of the train and I prayed for a miracle, that the train would be captured or that the Germans would abandon the train. However, neither of these things happened. After several hours of waiting the train started up at full speed, westward. Most of us were either sleeping or napping, guardedly tuned in with their senses to anything that might occur, from the turn of the train to the loud voice of a German soldier. We went continuously without stopping all night, and only in the morning did the train stop, in the middle of a forest. The boxcars

were unloaded and we were allowed out to take care of our personal needs and to stretch our bones, continuously under the watchful eye of the Wehrmacht. All along now, we were treated like captives. But unlike the recent past, the cruelty, the hitting, pushing and the killing, was absent. When we asked for water to drink and wash the soldiers obliged without the rigors of military discipline and the scenes that had usually accompanied such requests.

Taking advantage of the relaxed atmosphere, we engaged the soldiers in conversation. They told us that Czestochowa was already captured by the Russians and that all of Polish Silesia was now in their hands. Of course, this welcome news made us feel both good and bad. Bad for we thought we had missed a good chance for freedom and good because, given the speed at which the Russians were moving in the East and the Allies in the West, the war could not last much longer. Upon inquiring where we were being taken, the soldiers replied in the negative, either because they did not know or they did not care to reveal it. Except the water, we received no food and we existed on the additional bread we had received upon departure from Rakow. Fortunately too, most of us had some food besides what we had been given, which we made use of now and shared with those that did not have any.

After a rest of an hour or so we were packed in the freight cars again for the continuation of our journey. Inside the boxcar, as the train went at full speed, occasionally slowing down while passing a small depot, I sat on my bag that I carried along with me and I was thinking. I am 21 years old and in relatively good health. As it stands now there is no chance to be freed before the war actually ends. And even if the mass killings and exterminations are no longer official policy, will I be able, under hard working and starving conditions to prevail, if only for a few months? I pondered this and, as on

many occasions before, it seemed as though my parents and relatives were standing before me and exclaiming: "yes, you will! yes, you must!" Thus I thought to myself: "of course I shall overcome my enemy," and began my dream of freedom for myself and for the remnant of our people. And as I sat in my deep thoughts of things beautiful I could not stand hearing the voices of gloom coming from some of my friends engaged in a conversation. I interjected. "Look," I said, "we came a long way, nobody can stop us now. But we must be strong and think positive. The only way we can lose now is by defeating ourselves." But in spite of my entertaining positive thought and speaking bravely, to say that I did not have moments of doubt is to put it mildly.

The train kept on and on, stopping occasionally for water for the locomotive or for switching the train from one track to another. At one point the train slowed down and moved in on the back-tracks of a large depot, which had been partially destroyed. When we looked out through the openings in the boxcar we discovered from the signs outside that we were in Weimar, Germany. We had no doubts anymore as to where we were being taken.

Buchenwald, the notorious concentration camp, was only a few miles away. The locomotive that had brought our train was unhooked and a new one took its place. And, after several switches of track, we were on our way again. We entered a thick forest. Knowing our destination now, I no longer wondered whether our conditions, compared to Rakow, would worsen, only to what extent. I knew that Buchenwald concentration camp had been established soon after Hitler had come to power in Germany in 1933. It had served as a prison camp both for political prisoners and criminals. Its early inmates had been Hitler's opponents, both Jews and so-called enemies of the State. There were never any gas chambers, but torture, hangings and shootings, were a daily occurrence.

Not many people lived to tell the tales of Buchenwald, Most of those who did had been released in the early days of the Nazi regime upon the intervention of foreign governments.

As we were nearing Buchenwald, the talk in the boxcar centered on one theme. "There are no gas chambers in Buchenwald." It seemed apparent that, although it was known that gas chambers had been abolished, it was a relief to us that none had ever existed in Buchenwald. Most, nevertheless, were quite aware of the deadliness of this concentration camp. Soon the train came to a stop for the tracks too came to an end. Because, for those brought here, the Gestapo and the Third Reich had no plans except destruction.

However, a terminal it was, even though it had neither waiting rooms nor facilities of a regular depot. It was in the middle of a forest, as was the concentration camp. After waiting for a while, the doors were unlocked and the SS appeared. The sight of them even at that late hour for the German Reich, was as cruel as ever. The shepherd dogs at their side and sticks in their hands, they ordered us out of the box cars, helping us along with a few shoves and hits. Once out of the cars, we were lined up, counted, inspected and reinspected. We were then led to the concentration camp gate, which was some walking distance away. The gate was huge, with barbed wire, separated in the middle by a barrier leaving one side for entering, and the other for leaving. There were guard huts on both sides of the gate. Adjoining the gate were the administration offices of the camp. The camp was under the daily supervision of the SS. Over the gate the administration buildings on both sides of the gate were connected with a tower which served for observation and offices. I hope that memory serves me right in describing this. However, if there are any discrepancies, they are in general, minor.

After we passed the gate we found ourselves in a huge open area, the ground nicely finished with concrete, called the Apel platz, or the place of inspections or morning and evening roll call that the prisoners were treated to every day. We were lined up again in front of our bags of belongings that we had carried with us, facing the gate from the inside. An SS higher officer, assisted by a few regular SS, inspected us again, after which he gave a speech, enumerating the various rules and regulations of behavior, which failure to observe would result in death by hanging on this very square. Attempt at escape was futile, he observed, because the camp was surrounded by observation towers at close intervals, manned by guards with order to shoot far in advance, before anyone could reach the heavy barbed wire which surrounded the camp. But, should anybody by chance reach the barbed wire, he warned, he would die from electrocution for the wire was live with current.

With these preliminaries finished, we were led through the camp to the bathhouse. The place was relatively small and could not accomodate the whole group. So the majority had to wait while a few at a time were let in. It was late in the afternoon and as it was we had done a lot of waiting already. Even though it was in January it was luckily not too cold. I, nevertheless, was very tired, exhausted and cold. After some additional waiting for my turn, I finally got into the bathhouse.

This place was under the total jurisdiction of the prisoners who had spent a long time here, and they were mainly German nationals. The sacks of clothing that we had dragged along with us were taken away from us. Even our clothes we had to give up. Once completely disrobed, we were led into a chamber where a large round wooden tub was standing, filled with a liquid. Each and everyone of us had to get into the tub and completely immerse himself, but not

before they cut off all our hair. The liquid was very strong and left a burning sensation on the skin minutes after immersion. While they were trying to kill the bugs on us, they did not care if they were burning and destroying our skins in the process. From here we were led into an adjoining shower room where we finally had a chance to wash ourselves and get the benefit of a hot shower. All along, as we were processed from the disinfection room into the shower room, doctors were checking our bodies and outside organs for lacerations and diseases. The majority of us were pretty healthy but a few did not make the grade. They were given what we called "death injections" and they never experienced the Buchenwald concentration camp. Instead, they were reduced to ashes in the Buchenwald crematory.

Through a door leading to a supply room, we subsequently filed by in a single line in front of a counter where each of us received a pair of wooden shoes, a black and white, or blue and white striped pants and jacket, and a similar striped cap. Each of us was also assigned a number which was sewn into the front of the jacket. I was assigned number 116297. From here on I was to be known only by this number. When I put on my new attire I had a feeling of being half naked and this being the winter season I had grave doubts of being able to protect myself from the cold. The transition was indeed very hard for till now I had had enough clothes, although old and worn out; to dress according to weather. Also, to add insult to injury, with the confiscation of our clothes they stripped me of what little money I still had. When we were led out into the outside, on the way to assignment to a barrack, we clung to one another, trying to keep warmer that way. A new sense of frustration and despair came over all of us. But, as usual, we had no choice but to go on. For to do otherwise at this stage would have been unthinkable.

Our destination was a cluster of barracks on the other end of the

camp, opposite the main gate, called the quarantine and separated from the rest of the camp by barbed wire and a gate. To reach it we walked through the length of the camp and had a chance, in spite of the cold, to observe all the many inmates of the many different nationalities of this concentration camp. There were Germans and Poles, Czechs, Russians, Hungarians, French, and many others. Even though I knew that many people of other nationalities were sharing the fate of the Jews, actually seeing it was consoling and made my isolation feel less total. Proof again that misery loves company under any conditions. It was late in the afternoon and dusk was approaching when we reached the quarantine.

I was assigned to a barracks called, I believe, Block 65, one of several in the quarantine but only one of two that had straw sacks and blankets on the bunks. It was clean and warm. After situating ourselves, which did not take long for we had nothing except the rags on our backs, we were ordered to line up for the first meal which was brought to us in the barracks. It was a soup of potatoes, but predominantly water. Although very hungry, and unable to still that hunger with this soup, I as well as the rest of my fellow inmates, felt thankful just to be out of the cold. We considered ourselves fortunate to have wound up in a barrack considered the best in the quarantine and as good as those in the main part of the camp where old time and privileged prisoners were stationed. There, in tiers of two, there were separate beds for each individual.

Close to eight o'clock in the evening an SS man came in and we were ordered to line up again in front of our bunks for inspection. He again repeated the rules of conduct here and picked a few prisoners to be in charge of the barrack, to pick up the food in the kitchen and distribute it among the inmates twice daily. Curfew was at 8 P.M. Thus, after the SS man was finished with the inspection, the lights were turned off and we were ordered to sleep. Although

I was very tired, I could not fall asleep. The hunger was bothering me something awful. Never during all the war had I been as hungry as now. Until coming here I had always been able to supplement the rations. Would I be able to do it here? As I was lying and thinking it seemed to me most improbable unless something close to a miracle should happen. I had better learn how to overcome hunger pains and live, I thought to myself. But then, how long would I be able to survive undernourished?

I tossed from one side to the other, thinking about Czestochowa, already liberated, and about those fortunate people who had stayed behind. They were now free and no longer concerned about their survival. But liberation could be too distant even here, with the Allies in France and Belgium. And then I dreamed that perhaps the Allies would bomb the perimeter of the concentration camp, soften the defenses, then drop paratroops and rescue the camp. Of course, these thoughts were not based on reality, only on wishful thinking. Yet they helped me in overcoming the mental and physical torment which otherwise would have been unbearable.

By morning hunger had me so overpowered that I could think of nothing else but food. When the order to get up and prepare for inspection came, I was relieved. For I knew that soon we would receive our daily bread rations. Meanwhile, those who wished could go to the washroom and latrine, which was a short distance away. It was still dark and very cold outside and many remained in the warm rather than venture outside for a cold wash. As long as I had had the strength, I had never allowed myself the luxury of physical neglect over temporary comfort, even if it meant strong discipline and more hardship. So I ran to the washroom and, with people one on top of the other, I tried to catch some water and to get out as quickly as possible. There was no soap so what I actually did was wet my face and hands with water that felt

like ice and dried myself with the rags we all shared.

I ran as fast as I could back to the barracks. There the inmates were lining up in front of the bunks, awaiting the SS officer for the morning inspection on the outside. When the SS man appeared he walked slowly past everybody, said nothing and bothered nobody, not that morning, nor anytime later. For the duration of my stay in this barrack it indeed was a welcomed relief to be spared the long inspections in the freezing cold and the physical and human degradations that accompanied these spectacles. Following the inspection the kitchen detail brought the rations of a slice of bread and black coffee made from burned grain for each inmate. I can honestly say that for the first time in my life, when I sat down on my bunk that morning to eat that hard slice of black bread and coffee, it tasted like the best food in creation. I was so terribly hungry that I tried to prolong my meal by drinking a lot with each small bite of bread. By doing this I hoped to fill my stomach, at least for a short period. Hunger, and how to deal with it, was to be the biggest problem for me from then till liberation. It was no accident that malnutrition and hunger was the biggest cause of death during my stay in Buchenwald.

After I finished my breakfast, I stayed on my bunk as most others did, and conversed with a friend who shared the bunk with me. It was not long before I fell asleep. When I woke up it was afternoon already. Having nothing to do, I went to neighboring barracks to meet and talk with friends who had come together with me and to make new acquaintances. I found that, whereas the barrack I was assigned to was completely made up of prisoners who came from Rakow, the other barracks were a mixture of different people who had come here both earlier and at the same time as I had. Their barracks were not so clean as ours and the bunks were bare of blankets or straw sacks. Conversation with my friends centered around the barrack, the terrible nutrition, and the possible reasons for the special treatment of allowing us to do nothing. We

wondered what they had up their sleeves for us, whether this was not a calm before a big storm. We hoped that, whatever plans the Germans had for us, the Allies would soon be here and prevent their realization.

When I returned to my home barrack it was dusk. I roamed among the bunks, encountering groups of people, again listening to their stories, reminiscing or speculating as to the future. Again the time came for the distribution of the daily soup, followed later in the evening by inspection. This routine continued for about two weeks. Although I did not do any physical work during this time, my physical condition was changing rapidly. I was losing weight and I felt weaker every passing day. Thus, when our barrack was broken up and we were reassigned to different barracks outside the quarantine, I welcomed the transition, hoping for a chance to go outside the camp to work and the possibility of acquiring, or, as it was called in the camp, of organizing additional food. How terribly disappointed was I, therefore, when I found myself in the new barrack filled with inmates beyond capacity.

Besides being dirty, the bunks were in three tiers, bare and overcrowded. As a result, we were squeezed in like sardines, sleeping in one position, warming one another with our bodies, but at the same time infecting one another with rampant diseases, especially dysentery, which creates a constant need for bowel movement, bloody and consuming. While sleeping, quite often, one found himself lying in a puddle of stinking discharge of water and blood from an inmate close by, who could no longer, either because of loss of strength or the softness of the discharge, make it to the latrine. Sometimes it came down from a tier above. And then, as time went on, one came to expect it from any direction, if he was not himself afflicted.

At 5 o'clock in the morning, in contrast to the other barrack, we were

forced outside for inspection, made to stay at attention for an hour to freeze and to further diminish our physical resistance to sickness and disease. The older inmates in this barrack were dying off like flies. Every morning a detail of prisoners, especially assigned to handle the dead, gathered the dead of the previous night, disrobing them and painting their identification numbers on their bodies. Every morning there was a pile of skeletons laying in front of the barrack waiting to be carried away to the crematoria. Of course there were also those in the barrack who every morning went to work outside the concentration camp in the SS billets, cleaning there or making repairs, and also being fed there. These were the privileged ones.

Other inmates went outside the camp to Weimar to work on demolition of the bombed buildings. They too, at times, were able to supplement their diet by finding food in the destroyed buildings. They too, were a steady work detail and very seldom were new inmates added. There were though, calls for inmates to register for labor, to be transferred to other camps close to the work but still under the nominal jurisdiction of Buchenwald. Usually Buchenwald served as a resupply center for inmates who had been killed, tortured or who had died from hard labor or undernourishment. Sometimes the weak and exhausted were returned to Buchenwald after the exchange. The returnees, ironically, were sometimes in the camp hospital, for medical treatment administered by inmate doctors.

Ironically also, there was a barrack which was used as, or rather called, the camp hospital. But the living conditions and the food were not much different from those of the regular barracks. The inmate doctors had really no means of treating anybody except for some pills and death shots. To the extent that the prisoners were not bothered with inspections and harrassment and left completely alone, it was a slight improvement. For the doctors it served as a haven and a means of better survival. For ever so often food came in from

international sources, which, after most of it was stolen by the Germans, was divided amongst them and the key inmate personnel running the so-called hospital. For the Germans it served as a display of their extension of medical and humanitarian treatment to the prisoners, while profiting in the process from the food shipments. Rarely, I was told, some of the food was distributed among the prisoners.

The registration of inmates for labor at other camps was not compulsory except when the necessary number was not filled. The majority preferred to stay in Buchenwald and chance survival or death there rather than to be exposed for long journeys in locked freight cars and Allied air attacks. Then the addition of hard labor, harsh treatment with no improvement in diet, meant certain death. There were, however, those who were ready to take the risks, hoping to be lucky enough to be sent to a place where the diet was better rather than to slowly expire in Buchenwald. I was also confronted with this question. I decided against registration for I figured the chances of landing an improved situation were very remote. In the meantime, days which seemed endless became weeks. It seemed as if I had been born into this routine of 5 o'clock morning inspection in the freezing cold, followed by morning bread ration and black coffee, followed by inactivity, walking around the barrack watching the misery, watching prisoners dropping dead like flies, the expectation of the daily soup preceded by a continuous hunger pain. Many times out of sheer hunger, some went in line a second time to receive an additional container of soup at the risk of being killed or mortally wounded by the inmate chief functionary of the barrack called the stube aeltester.

One morning the SS ordered us out of the barrack and led us out of the camp to a nearby stonepit in the forest. For recreation they made us carry

heavy bricks from one hill to another. The ground was wet and slushy with snow. We wore wooden shoes and were very much underdressed for the weather. The SS men were lined up by the route over which we had to carry the stones to speed us up with hits and jeers and to make sure that no one made the run empty-handed. Every time we made a step in the slush and mud we had to fight to get our feet out and when we did not we were forced to leave our shoes behind. The work in itself served no purpose whatsoever, except to further thin our ranks. A few inmates never had to worry about food, hunger and survival anymore. The cruelty and suffering was so great that many prayed for relief in death. I have seen many I knew to have been very religious, in their frustration, completely renounce the existence of God.

In the evening, when we were returned to the barrack, many could not make it on their own and had to be carried. Those of us who did walk barely made it. The following day we were not bothered but the number of dead tripled. Several days later we were again treated to this "freedom through hard labor", as the SS called it. I struggled hard to persevere, but it became evident to me that a few more excursions with loads of brick on my back with no ability to fire my energies with an increased diet, in my present state of exhaustion, meant a painful death and very shortly. Therefore I decided to take the gamble and register to be transferred to a labor camp. Therefore, during the next few days, I was subjected to a physical examination in the camp auditorium by SS doctors. Though there were some who were rejected, the majority were scheduled for shipment within a day or two. Another trip to the bathhouse was followed by a trip to the supply room, where we were issued striped topcoats, and escorted outside the camp to be loaded into freight cars for another journey into the unknown.

Again I was in a locked boxcar, but this time there was some room for

elbow movement, with an SS guard inside the box car. At will, therefore, he opened and locked the moving gates of the box car, allowing for some daylight and fresh air. We were loaded in, late in the afternoon, preceded by the usual inspections and counting. We were also treated to the regular disciplines that accompanied such spectacles. After we situated ourselves in the boxcar and enjoyed our just issued ration of bread and coffee, we sat in silence, waiting for the train to depart. Some entertained themselves in quiet conversation with their friends. I was sitting very silent because, for some unexplained reason, I felt very bad. Also, for the first time, most of the people I did not know. Of course, this in itself did not present any problem. We were all Jews, although from different countries and had the same problems. It was late in the evening before the train finally pulled away from the Buchenwald track on the way to Weimar. We huddled together for it was very cold.

When we arrived in Weimar the train was left on a side track to sit for hours. Because of the consistent bombing by the Allies, the terminals and tracks were in constant disrepair, and trains moved on a priority basis. Throughout the night the train was switched around different tracks until we wound up on the main track leading out of Weimar towards our new destination. During the night and the following day my physical condition deteriorated. I felt so bad that I could not sit up. Everytime I attempted to stand I had to quickly lie down because I became dizzy and blacked out. It happened to me so suddenly that I feared that I might not survive the trip. My fellow inmates, noticing my dilemma, especially those situated next to me, took special care of me. One provided a blanket, another one brought me additional clothes to keep me warm. They brought me my bread ration and hot coffee and practically never left me alone.

The train was in transit for several days and we were allowed out at

intervals for our natural needs. My friends practically carried me in and out when I needed it. The train was more often sitting idle than moving. Several times during the journey the sirens went, warning of an oncoming bombing raid. Everytime it happened our guard took off, together with his comrades, to seek shelter. Soon thereafter there would be a sound of planes in the air, followed by sounds of falling shells and explosions. Although we were in the midst of danger ourselves, the falling bombs and shrapnel sounded like the most beautiful music to our ears. Then, just as it had begun, it ended with the sirens sounding off. The guards returned and our freedom thus remained short lived.

My own thoughts were centered on my physical condition, which, if not improved soon, could end, if not by natural death then by a shot of poison. The encouragement of my fellow inmates, the gloom of the guards plus the feeling that the war's end was close, made me determined to go on and try hard to survive. I kept telling myself that I was physically sound and that my weakness was a result of losing a great deal of weight. I therefore tried, with the help of my friends, to preserve what little was left of my strength, using my energy very sparingly.

After several days of movement in all different directions, and as much idle standing on the tracks, we were finally told that we had arrived at our destination. We were ordered out of the boxcars and formed into columns of four to be escorted to the camp. Despite the fact that everybody had looked forward to the end of this journey, hoping for a camp with conditions of food and shelter at least tolerable, I dreaded the time that I would have to test my strength, to get up and walk. I was, therefore, relieved, when, with the help of my fellow inmates, I stood up without becoming dizzy. I could not, however, jump off the box car as most did and had to be helped down. When we started to walk I mustered every ounce of energy within me so as not to fall behind and provoke the wrath of the guards. I

became convinced that my difficulty could easily be overcome with a proper diet and I hoped that I would somehow be able to supplement the regular rations. On our way we passed by inmates of the camp working on the road. They dropped hints that the place was much worse than Buchenwald, that even the most fit eventually succumbed to the hard labor and poor diet, that the camp was considered an exhausting and finishing-up camp. After considerable walking we finally reached the camp.

It consisted of a number of barracks in the middle of nowhere, enclosed by barbed wire fence, with a gate guarded by SS. To this day I do not know the name of the camp, nor the place where it was. It was late in the afternoon when we entered the camp and stopped in front of the administration barrack and waited for the camp commander to appear to inspect and count his new work horses. After a while, a fat, older SS officer came out in the company of other SS and an inmate doctor. The usual routine of an inspection drill followed, with the counting of heads and the recounting. When the SS camp commander was finished with the inspection, the inmate doctor took over, to administer first aid where necessary. When he came to me he fell into my arms for he was a doctor from my native city of Czestochowa and we recognized one another immediately.

He called me Kantorek and inquired how I got here? He said that my fate would be sealed if I remained in the camp, confirming what I had heard previously from the inmate workers on the way to the camp. He immediately took me out of the column and placed me with a few others to be sent to the camp hospital and, together with others already in the hospital, to be shipped back the following day to Buchenwald. I sincerely believe that the doctor was sent from heaven. For had I remained in that camp I most certainly would not have survived.

I felt relieved when I got to the barrack hospital because I finally had

a chance to lie down on a bed with a mattress and rest and warm my tired and frozen bones. I was very weak and could hardly walk, but the barrack was delightfully warm and inmate medics were distributing the daily soup. I wished I could be confined here for a few days. The inmates in the hospital whose fate I was now sharing were physically broken people, even more so than I was. They too considered themselves lucky to be leaving the camp and going back to Buchenwald. They gave accounts of the tough regime of hard labor and cruel treatment which, lately, had abated considerably. They said that the majority of the inmates worked on the roads and that when they became exhausted and weak and could not perform the work, they were beaten to death by the SS. Only a very few survived and only lately had this merciless killing eased. Knowing that tomorrow I would be on the move again, I made the most of every minute of my newfound comforts. I tried everything to recuperate. Some of the prisoners had bread but could not take it anymore. So I wound up exchanging some of my soup for their bread.

That night I rested and slept very well. The following morning we were ordered to assemble in the camp square for inspection before departure to Buchenwald. The sight on the square was appalling. It was not an inspection of human beings, but rather of skeletons, barely standing up. In my own anxiety I searched for an answer, while observing the camp commander going through the motions, for his benevolence in sending us to Buchenwald rather than killing us here. After all, at other times and at other places, much healthier people had been put to death. My troubled mind did not have to bother any longer. Soon, the commander of the camp satisfied that everything was in order we were turned over to the guards who directed us to start moving out. Again I passed the same sights. Again as yesterday I enlisted every ounce of my energy to keep going. When we finally reached the railway tracks and I found myself in the

cattle car again, I was glad, as were all the other inmates, to rest my bones. However, in spite of my exhaustion I felt a great deal better than I had the day before when I descended this platform. I relaxed and soon began napping.

When I woke up the train was already in motion. During our return journey to Buchenwald, except for the daily distribution of bread, occasional permission of the guards to let us out of the box cars when the train was waiting to be routed, or the now very frequent air raid alarms, nothing extraordinary took place. We sensed that the Allies must be closing in on the Germans daily and our freedom could be at hand anytime. After several days we were back in the Weimar yards and, finally, the train made its way to the Buchenwald track. When the train came to rest at the end of the track, I found that the procedure that followed my original arrival in Buchenwald still persisted. After some waiting, the doors of the freight cars opened and we were greeted by the SS in the usual fashion. Since the majority of the inmates were unable to move speedily, quite a few did not enter the camp alive. Apparently, all the reverses in the war and the imminent defeat of the Third Reich did not still the thirst for blood of the SS.

Those of us who did make it through the gate and into the camp were led, after an inspection on the main square of the camp, to the bathhouse. The waiting to be admitted was even longer than when I first arrived here. When I had first come here in January, although it was cold then too, I had still been fully dressed in my own clothes and had also been in better shape physically. Now the wet shoes, the cold, and the hours of waiting, really were getting to me. My freezing body was aching beyond description. In despair, we stuck to one another with our bodies, thus creating one single mass of human skeleton. Finally, after many hours of waiting, this episode of our hell on earth ended, when we

were allowed into the bathhouse. After the procedure of delousing, which was the same every time, and the issuance of concentration camp clothing, which consisted of a striped round cap, jacket, pair of pants and wooden shoes, we were off, back to the same barracks from which, a few days earlier, I had departed in the hope of a better break.

The situation here did not get any better. The ^{DAY} break inspection in the freezing cold, the almost daily harrassment in the nearby forest, forcing us to carry heavy rocks from one place to another, was taking its toll and contributing to the ever increasing dead. When I came back to the barrack from the journey my condition had already deteriorated. Then, after a couple days, I developed a case of almost constant diarrhea. I felt that unless I was left alone and suspended from the daily rigors and harrassment, my pitiful existence would end within days, another skeleton on a pile in front of the barrack, another statistic in the record books. As I was determined to avoid this fate, I appealed to the barrack chief, himself an inmate, and to the barrack first aid for help. I was able to persuade them to recommend me to the camp hospital. After a day or so a group of inmates left the barracks and was transferred to the camp hospital.

I was in this group. I was indeed fortunate for quite a few in the group were taken into a room especially assigned for ^{THIS} purpose and there given an expiration injection. The hospital barrack was not any different from the other barracks but at least here the inmates on the bunks were given elbow room. The soup which was part of the diet, was thicker and generally one was left alone to lie on his bunk without harrassment. Next to the original hall where the sick inmates were situated, there was an inside latrine which was in constant use. For most of the inmates were afflicted with diarrhea or dysentery. In spite of the rest and an occasional pill

dispensed by the inmate doctors, the attrition rate was very high. Those with the advanced disease were unable to consume even the food that was made available and were in the latrine most of the time, discharging their guts and blood. Ever so often the doctors, either because they could not stand to watch the pain of the sick in a hopeless battle for life, or because they had to produce a certain number of dead, administered what they called mercy injections.

For me, however, the hospital made the difference between staying alive or dying. I stayed here for a couple of weeks and my diarrhea lessened with every passing day. Although I was very weak, for it was impossible for me to gain strength on the diet in the hospital, I nevertheless improved a great deal in spirit. I extended my stay as long as possible. The inmate doctors on the other hand, watched closely for any improvement in the inmates in order to return them to their original blocks.

At the end of March a big shipment of inmates came into Buchenwald from Bergen-Belsen, a camp on which the allies were closing in. A few of the sick were brought into the hospital and one man in his forties was given space on the bunk next to me. He was mortally ill but was able to tell me that the Allies are already on German soil and advancing rapidly towards us, that he had been evacuated from Bergen-Belsen and made to march all the way here, that the SS were still brutal and had killed many on the road, especially those who could not continue walking. He further said that he had held up very well up until very nearby, in spite of the horrendous treatment and hard labor in the camps, but that now he saw no hope for his survival. In high fever he bemoaned the fact that he had come so very close to liberation. He compared himself to Moses, seeing the promised land yet unable to enter it. I encouraged him not to lose hope and not to give up but he countered that it

was hopeless, adding that, as his wife and children had perished, perhaps it was better that he perish too. I was very touched, by what I considered in those days an older gentleman, and tried to convince him that it was because of his wife and children that he ought to fight on. My efforts were fruitless. He had no appetite and no desire to eat. I tried hard to make him eat, to no avail. He soon became unconscious and was removed from the bunk, dying or dead. I shall never forget this gentle man.

A few days later, at the beginning of April, I was again issued camp attire and discharged from the hospital. Again I was on my way to the barrack which I despised instinctively as a death trap. When I made my first steps outside the hospital, I realized how weak I was. I felt a dizziness and heard a ringing in the ears. But it was spring and the bright sun was out, gently warming my body. It was soothing and carressing, and seemed to say that the winter had gone forever, that if I hung on I was in for a long spring. The Buchenwald concentration camp was teeming with 60,000 inmates, double the usual amount. The influx was the result of camps being evacuated in the face of the advancing Allies. When I reached my block and reported to the barrack chief I found discipline at a minimum. I also found the pile of skeletons in the front of the barrack bigger than ever. The stories circulating among the prisoners of how the brave, masterful, German soldier was running without a head and surrendering without resistance, were joyful and full of hope for us. The only fight that was still being put up was by the SS which was no more than a desperate effort, and even they were fleeing in droves. These beasts, however, were still killing and shooting, especially Jews, in their retreat.

This was not encouraging news but still I was very hopeful. The morning inspections had been abandoned and the inmates had thus been left alone to

live or die. Instead, however, through the camp microphone situated on the top of the front gate, the SS began calling on inmates to assemble in front of the main gate to be evacuated. The contention was that the front was moving closer, thus making it unsafe for those staying behind. What irony! For about five days, beginning April 4, the SS continuously called strictly on Jews to assemble for the march. I was very suspicious when they wanted strictly Jews, but I had made up my mind long before that I would either leave this place as a free man or die here. My wandering, I thought to myself, was over. Besides, at this stage, I could not have sustained a ten meter walk, much less a walk of miles. I buried my head in the bunk and said: "if you want me, you will have to come and get me." This went on several times a day and everytime it happened I either laid openly on my bunk or hid behind the barrack. The story of my hospital friend from Bergen was not lost on me. Many Jews did heed the call and many other inmates too. After every call it quieted down and I came out and sat under the warming sun with a friend whom I had known from the Rakow camp in Czewtochowa, a native of Czystochowa. On about April 8 only those joining the evacuation received any kind of food. For the rest of us the distribution of bread and soup stopped. All I could do was sit with my friend in the sun and talk about what we would be able to do if liberated, and hope. We were not really hungry, for the thought of freedom nourished us and kept us alive. With every passing day the sound of machine gun fire was getting closer and louder. Allied aircraft overhead flew undisturbed. With every passing day the sun intensified its brightness and the skies were a clear white and blue. The freshness in the air and the occasional breeze was inviting to our lungs. With every passing day freedom seemed coming ever so closer, almost becoming touchable, except for the effort of staying alive. When I looked around myself and I saw

the ever increasing number of corpses and the living skeletons succumbing to hunger and disease, I kept asking my friend why had they been given to make this journey to the end, suffering needlessly more than those who had fallen in the beginning only to die in terrible pain. He could not answer but to cry. But the answer came from those still clinging to life hopelessly and about to expire. By their motions and pronouncements they showed they were happy and at peace to have been privileged to witness the downfall of Hitler.

On April 10, 1945, the day started as usual. No longer were the SS ordering anybody to come forward to the main gate for evacuation. Tired from lying on my bunk and terribly hungry, I dragged myself down to the floor. The barrack was not as crowded as before. Many had obeyed the orders and left. Buchenwald to find freedom somewhere on the road. I roamed from one end of the barrack to the other. After a while I found my friend and we stepped inside. We walked and we talked. We talked about everything, about yesterday's shooting, which sound seemed so very near, and today's prevailing calm. Would there be a battle for the camp, we wondered, or would we be liberated without bloodshed. We talked about the past, about Czestochowa. I remembered my parents, my brother and my sister, my brother, with whom sharing my life, if only for a brief time in the "small Ghetto", was rewarding and unforgettable, however heartbreaking. How wonderful it would have been to have had him close to me now, I said to my friend. My friend also remembered his wife and his children whom he had lost in the most horrifying days of our lives and the darkest days in the history of the Jewish people. But, in a way they were all here with us, our relatives and our friends, and all the millions murdered. They were here to urge us on and give us strength for the still existing thin line between death and freedom which could still prove to be our biggest hurdle.

We were completely exhausted, suffering from severe hunger. It was questionable whether our systems would be able to respond to nourishment and normal life again. We sat down outside and then we walked again. We came back inside the barrack and we talked again, joining with others speculating about our liberation. "They will not give up this place without a battle," some said. "It's futile for them," others countered. But, whatever, the majority conviction was that those of us who survived would live to be free, that the time for a planned mass killing of inmates as a last desperate act of the Germans had passed us by. Thus, we were fully convinced that, barring some last minute upset or misfortune, our freedom was imminent.

I returned to my bunk and laid down. I did not stay there long, however, because I was driven by hunger, by restlessness, and a desire to follow the events as they undoubtedly would unfold. I went out of the barrack again. I had been outside for only a few minutes when the prevailing calm was suddenly interrupted by some close shooting. I felt it wise to return to the barrack. The shooting continued for about a half an hour and then it stopped as suddenly as it had started. I walked around in the barrack with my friend looking out the windows. A great many other did the very same thing, while still many more lay on their bunks caring less about what was happening. Naturally, our eyes were fixed on the watchtowers manned by guards.

CHAPTER 3

Liberation

At about 12 o'clock what I saw seemed unbelievable to my own eyes. The SS guard on the tower that I had my eyes fixed on, suddenly disappeared. While I did not see him in the tower, I was not sure whether he had actually left. After checking with my friend and others, what I had hoped for the last five years became reality. The answer did not come in words but rather in embraces and tears. Then the words came out in whispers: "we are free, we are free, thank God we are finally free." And then we went outside the barrack to make sure that our joy was not premature. Indeed, there was not a trace of a single SS. Those inmates who had the strength went up to the main gate and the administration offices. I was too weak to do the same. Besides, I considered it very dangerous to walk around now and returned to the barrack. Most of the people in my barrack were either in the same shape I was or worse. Thus, I cannot recall a single inmate who did not remain in the barrack. There was no celebration and none could sing but the joy was overwhelming. There were more tears shed now than when the killings had been in full swing. There was a sign of relief from everybody for, even though many of us had not yet eluded death, the fear of dying from a bullet, the rope of the hangman or in the gas chambers, which had pressed on our minds for the past five years, had been removed.

Thus, from here onward we were free to live or die naturally as might be the wish of God. The rest of the day and the following night we spent in anticipation of our liberators. On April 11, 1945, the first outposts of the

3rd U.S. Army arrived, soon followed by thousands of men, trucks, tanks and guns. Our liberation was now visible and physically complete. At first the soldiers occupied the outside of the camp moving slowly inside taking over the main camp until they reached our area which was called the small camp. When a small group of soldiers entered our barrack the emotional scenes were beyond human expression. To get to the barrack the soldiers had already encountered the hundreds of dead bodies sprawled all over in piles, bones and holes in the heads of the bodies that had once held human eyes. Combat hardened soldiers, who were by now used to death and dying, were nevertheless moved very much by this sight. For the bodies were first hand testimony of the cruelty of the oppressor. Once inside the barrack, the sight of more skeletons still alive but beyond help, and of those of us who spoke and moved and were also skeletons, added to their tremendous depression.

When we first met, we reacted as if we had known one another for a long time, as if a long-delayed reunion had finally taken place. We embraced them and kissed them and tried to tell them of our sufferings. They responded in parting with all the food, water and cigarettes they had with them. It was the first time that I had seen battle hardened men actually shedding tears. They counseled us and promised vengeance for us and for those who had died. They soon parted from us but they left us with the knowledge that our hungry bodies would be fed and that all the help for our physical and mental restoration would be forthcoming with deliberate speed. The same day we heard about some of our SS guards having been caught by the inmates of the big camp who had been fit enough to undertake these pursuits. Before the SS were turned over to the American military authorities they were, however, given a taste of their own treatment.

It was not until the following day April 12, 1945, that a working administration took over the camp and it was at that time that the first meal was distributed among the inmates. It consisted of a thick soup heavy with pork pieces and very fat. Most of the inmates had been without food for days and the inmates who took command of the camp tried to get some food to the starving people in a hurry, simply by going out to the adjoining German farmers and confiscating all their hogs. But the soup, which would have been perfect for ordinary healthy people proved to be disastrous. Most inmates who took it in a hurry and filled their bellies with it were either dead the following day or in the hurriedly-created hospitals outside of the camp in the former quarters of the SS. I, fortunately, after tasting the soup, thought it wise in spite of my hunger, not to eat it or at least very little of it, considering my recent bout with diarrhea. As a matter of fact it took me a while thereafter before my diarrhea was completely cleared up.

On that day the American military rounded up all the German intelligentsia and civilian officials and brought them into the camp to view the bodies and then to bury them. Of course, they continued to claim that they had known nothing about the atrocities and, to make their excuses believable, shed tears and cried over the fate of the dead. But that it was their defeat rather than the dead that the Germans cried over, was my impression, and I so protested to them as I intermingled with them and talked to them. On that day, the news also reached us that President Franklin D. Roosevelt had died. Hence, the man who was the leader of the free world, the organizer and executor of the assault on Nazism and fascism, the man most despised by Hitler as being a friend of the Jews, was no longer. He had succumbed to a cerebral hemorrhage and failed to see final victory and the end of his arch enemy, Hitler.

Of course we were very saddened over this loss but we were also very worried. For we thought of Mr. Roosevelt as the indispensable champion for liberty and freedom and, indeed, as a special friend of the Jews. Later on, I was quite disappointed when I learned that Roosevelt's friendship for Jews had been superficial and motivated by political expediency. Whereas he was considered a great humanitarian, he did very little or nothing to ease our plight before or during the holocaust and in spite of having had first hand information of the atrocious events. The man I believed to have been the greatest man of our time even before the war, I discovered later to have made promises to the Arabs exactly opposite those he had made to the Jews for a Jewish National home in Palestine. He had been silent when his voice carried so much weight. His option of reprisal or mere threat of reprisal against German PWS might have changed the course of history and avoided the disaster that followed.

But all this I was to learn later. At the time I harbored a feeling of great love for the man and was deeply saddened over his demise. I was, nevertheless, full of hope for myself and for the remnants of my people. I visualized a total rehabilitation of the survivors. I saw the end of persecution of Jews by law and deed. I dreamed that antisemitism, which plagued our people for almost 2,000 years and left in its wake many tortures, massacres and pogroms, would be finally eradicated, that the world at long last would not hinder the Jews from going to and living in peace in our ancient Jewish homeland of Palestine. I hoped for a peaceful world of understanding and cooperation. This feeling was grand and very much sustaining emotionally and physically to me and to my fellow inmates.

In the meantime, there was much impatience with time. For although we were free already, we craved for return to normalcy, which we wanted faster

than was possible. Despite the breakdown of the German war machine, the war was still on and the attention of the American military who had liberated us, had to be directed towards that effort. Our rehabilitation started but in a painful, slow, pace. The dead were buried. The ill and sick were concentrated in newly-established hospitals outside the camp attended by doctors, former inmates, and American military doctors and medics. Increased food rations and diets were distributed regularly. But early departure from camp was not in sight. Those, who had the strength were, of course, free to roam the concentration camp at will and even to leave the camp to roam the countryside or go to nearby Weimar. The camp became a beehive of visiting U.S. military personnel exploring the Nazi cruelties.

For me these adventures were out of the question for I was too weak, even to walk. Also, I still had no clothes except for the concentration camp attire. As a matter of fact, a few days after liberation, my body temperature shot up and I requested to be taken to the hospital. In the first two days after liberation this was not so simple because of lack of ambulances. Those available worked overtime and still could not accommodate the need. In my case I simply stood outside the barrack and when the ambulance came around I asked the driver to be taken along. On the way the driver of the ambulance turned many away for lack of space but promised to come back to pick them up.

The hospital was a converted German SS military quarters. The rooms were large and contained space for up to fifteen beds. As we entered, A Hungarian Jewish doctor asked for our individual complaints. Those of us with high temperature he took down to the basement for a cold shower. Afterwards, I was assigned a bed in one of the rooms. This was the first time in a very long time that I had laid down in a bed with a mattress covered with white linen, sheets, and

blankets, and all to myself. In spite of my fever I felt this to be real living. The days that followed were days of great care, devotion and dedication on the part of American military personnel. For several days my fever persisted and I was very ill. The cold showers were repeated every day. And thanks to the special food, intravenous feeding and shots, I, as well as many others, recovered slowly but surely. The casualty rate was indeed still very high but would have been much higher if not for the efforts of the Americans.

After my fever subsided I began slowly to recuperate. It was time now to treat the still-persisting traces of diarrhea. I was given special food to stop the diarrhea and to generally build my strength up. When I entered the hospital I had been slightly more than a bundle of bones. But now, with every passing day, thanks to the constant care, I could see my bones covering up with flesh and with enormous speed. In a way, I was witnessing my own physical rebirth. However miraculous my comeback, I was still too weak to ealk, even within the room. I tried, nevertheless, to make use of the bathroom when I needed to, and help my roommates whenever necessary. While in the hospital recuperating, I spent most of my time either reading or discussing with my roommates the daily war bulletins, the past, and dreaming of how the future would look. With our liberation, the war was over for us. The heavy burden that had seemed to rest on our shoulders for many years had been removed. However, there were many still in camps and on the roads, languishing in slavery and dying, and many more doing battle and dying to destroy the last vestiges of the Nazi tyranny.

On May 8th the war finally came to an end when Hitler's deputies surrendered unconditionally. The Third Reich lay in ruins. Hitler was dead and his people who had proclaimed themselves the mast race were hungry, frightened and at the mercy of the conquerors. I was still in the hospital when the war's end was

proclaimed. There was no celebration victory there. I was indeed happy, as were my roommates, that the killing and shooting had stopped. But we felt an emptiness and depression and a need for words that were never said. For it was indeed a hollow victory for us and for the Jewish people in general. Hitler had successfully destroyed six million Jews, thus eradicating the Jewish communities of Europe which for over a thousand years had contributed so richly to the development of the European continent in every field of endeavor.

During all the years of the war, and especially before liberation, the drive for life and survival had been the main preoccupation of the victims. The shock of their losses took their toll, but necessity pushed them aside, into the unconscious. They had accumulated there. After liberation, while the war was still going on and people were still dying, we were still engrossed with the burning desire for the day of final victory and the total destruction of Hitler's Germany. Once it was achieved these accumulated shocks moved into the forefront and despair set in. It became soon clear that each and everyone of us would have to deal with this burden, each in his own way. Some, though physically recovered, unfortunately became or remained mentally deranged. Others were affected in other ways. But none would completely escape the results of their terrible experiences.

Towards the middle of May, I had regained enough strenght to be discharged from the hospital. I was given some civilian clothes. I bid good-bye to my roommates and returned to the confines of the camp. In my absence, all the barracks that did not have bunks with straw sack mattresses had been abandoned. I was thus assigned to a new barrack with better accommodations. Daily now, nationals of different countries were departing in trucks towards their homelands. The first to leave were the French, Belgians, Dutch, and

other nationals of the western countries. The nationals of Eastern European countries were not in general willing to return to their countries, in spite of their having close relatives in those countries.

This was true especially of the Russians and the Yugoslavs. The Russian government mounted a strong propaganda appeal and, with the urging of the U.S. military authorities, which was self-serving, the drive eastward soon became heavy. Poles, Czechs, Germans, Ukrainians began leaving the camp. For us Jews, however, there was no place to go. We could not go back to our original places for our homes were no longer homes, but cemeteries. Nor were we wanted in our native countries.

Daily now, because I had nothing in particular to do to occupy my time, I roamed around the concentration camp from one end to the other discovering places that I had not known existed during my incarceration. Daily, companies of American military personnel made excursions to the camp to see for themselves the horrors of the Nazi atrocities. One day, as I was running around, I was asked by a soldier to explain a certain sight. Although I had studied English in high school, I had not spoken a word of it since the war began. For a moment I was at a loss. He inquired about a human tongue that had been placed in a bottle. I could not remember the right word, but I made myself understood, and soon the English words began coming back. When the soldier departed he gave me some chocolate bars and cigarettes in appreciation. I decided then to utilize my idle time as a camp guide so as to enrich my English and try to enlighten the Americans about the sufferings of our people. For the rest of my stay in Buchenwald I was known as an American guide.

The majority of the people in the camp who did not choose to return to their native countries, who, beside the Jews, consisted of many Ukrainians, Russians and Yugoslavs, filled their time engaging in games and play or simply

in idleness, looking forward from one meal to the other. Many though, took excursions out of the camp, going to Weimar city or elsewhere in the countryside and returning in the evenings. Every evening when we gathered together, those who had come back from Weimar or elsewhere usually brought stories of their adventures. They told of the humbleness and fear of the Germans, the almost total destruction of the cities and the readiness of some of the Germans to share their meager food resources and shelter with former inmates of concentration camps. One evening, when I had returned to the barrack from my daily guide tours, and after listening to some of the stories, I became interested in seeing German behaviour under military occupation. I asked some of my friends who intended to go to Weimar the following day if I might join them. They cautioned me that the walk was very tiring and that unless I felt strong enough I should not undertake it. I felt, however, that my guiding the soldiers in the camp was just as tiring and yet presented no problem for me. I, therefore, decided that it would be good for me, for the first time since liberation, to leave the confines of the camp on my own. The following morning after breakfast, with my identity card from Buchenwald in my pocket, together with a couple of friends I ventured out of the camp towards Weimar.

When we came to Weimar it was already in the afternoon and time for lunch. We went into a bakery and engaged the lady owner in a conversation. Although it was hard for Germans to obtain bread, she offered us bread and sandwiches. Of course we accepted her hospitality and in the course of our conversation and meal, she shed some tears over her husband's captivity in Russia. She was not sure whether he was still alive, she said. For, since his capture, she had never heard from him. She decried the plight of the Germans, blaming Hitler for everything and, in a tone which was becoming familiar, she claimed

total lack of knowledge, both for herself and for most Germans, of the atrocities as committed by them in general and particularly against the Jewish people. She even denied awareness of any atrocities committed only a few miles from there in Buchenwald. We told her that every German, directly or indirectly, had had a hand in the mass murders and that one either had to have been blind or locked away in solitary not to have seen or heard about them.

After we finished our lunch we took a tour of the city. There was not a block where some of the buildings had not been destroyed. Some blocks had been completely demolished. The streets were full of military police, either on foot or patrolling in jeeps. U.S. Army personnel was visible everywhere, guarding military and government establishments. The Germans presented a sorry sight. The luster of the hero and conqueror which I had known for so many years had disappeared completely. Instead, a drabness and a sense of resignation, also known to me for too many years to be the trademark of so many people, the victims of the Germans, had now become their own experience. I was satisfied that justice, in a small measure, had been rendered, that the Germans, hopefully, had learned that they are not super-human. But, at the same time, I doubted that the Germans ever would be engulfed in the kind of fear that Jewish children, men and women had known since they were taken away into the unknown. For, in spite of their present state, none of them had to fear mass extermination. How much more satisfying would it have been and how much more meaningful had the majority of our people survived and witnessed the present state of the Germans.

That evening when we returned to the barrack I was very tired but also very satisfied. Tired, because this was the first time since liberation and my recent hospitalization that I had undertaken such an extensive walk, and

satisfied because I had suffered no ill effect from the walk. This convinced me that my recovery would soon be complete. Before retiring for the night, I shared my impressions of the Germans in Weimar with my friends in the barrack. Most agreed that the price that the Germans were paying for the cataclysms wrought upon mankind was indeed very small, that the shortage of food and shelter was very likely no uncommon, even among the European victors, that at no time, even with the best of intentions, would the Germans be able to cure the Jewish wound.

The following morning I returned to my job of guiding Americans through the camp. In the weeks that followed the departure of the inmates who decided to return to their native lands was completed. The remainder, a substantial number, resisted repatriation and instead, wished to be resettled in the West. The majority of the Jews clamored to go to Palestine. In the meantime, we were notified by the authorities that according to an agreement among the Allies the area here, including Weimar and Buchenwald, would be ceded to the Soviets and become part of the Russian Zone of Germany. The U.S. military would evacuate the area and those of us desiring it would be evacuated by military convoy further into West Germany to a displaced persons camp.

Thus preparations began for departure from Buchenwald. Several days later, early in the morning, army trucks arrived to take us on the new journey. Most of us, including myself, had very few belongings. It took, therefore, very little time for us to be loaded. Then off we went. It was summertime and the beautiful weather contributed to a pleasant journey. What a change in the way we had used to travel. We were free, there were no guards, only two soldiers, on each truck, one to drive and the other to help him. They tried to entertain us by cracking jokes and fed us "K" rations. We traveled by highway, going through rural and urban areas, seeing the intensity of the destruction

that Hitler had brought upon Germany. Ever so often we stopped to rest, and again the American soldiers tried to make the trip as pleasant as possible. Not only was it a pleasant trip. It was more like a summer picnic.

In the evening the trucks carrying us came to a halt in front of a camp with barbed wire and an American guard. The name of the place was Wildflecken, Germany, and the camp was a former German military base. The gates opened and the trucks drove up to several buildings which had been prepared for our arrival. The American soldiers with whom we had spent the day bid us goodbye and we were off to our new quarters. The rooms were nice and clean, no comparison to the quarters we had had in Buchenwald. Only four or five men were assigned to each room. I picked a room with three guys with whom I had shared sleeping quarters in Buchenwald the last few weeks and whom I had come to know well. Before we retired for the night we were told the way to the kitchen and the hours that the meals are served. Then we were invited to go to the kitchen to pick up the evening rations.

The camp was an enormously big place and among the inhabitants were families with children. Of course, these were not Jews. They were Poles, Lithuanians, Latvians, and some Russians. They were mainly families forcibly taken from the German-occupied territories in the East for labor in Germany. Since they did not choose to return to their native countries they remained here waiting for resettlement. Among them was a great number of Nazi collaborators, who now posed as displaced persons. How different was our plight from theirs. I quickly settled into a routine camp life, hoping for quick solutions and speedy movement back into a normal life.

But, after a few days here, I became very restless. Whereas in Buchenwald I had busied myself guiding military and civilian tourists throughout the concentration camp, Wildflecken was monotonous and forbidding. A day here

was nothing more than walks to the kitchen to receive one's food ration, lots of sleep, and games and horseplay among friends. But most disturbing were the fences, the guards, even though American, and the need for special permits to leave the camp. This policy of strict control, for whatever reasons, whether initiated by local authority or by higher-ups, after the Nazi concentration camps was hard to swallow. I decided to leave the camp and shared my decision with two of my friends. They too felt imprisoned again and decided to come along with me. The following morning we packed our few belongings, picked up our food rations, walked over the nearest side fence, jumped it and off on our way we were again.

At first we walked through fields and side roads but soon we hit the main highway. We did not know where we were nor where the highway was leading us. What we tried to do was reach a train terminal which would take us to a major city. We walked and walked and for miles there was nothing but farms, fields and country. The weather was beautiful, the sun was shining brightly, not too hot, the sky blue with not a single cloud in it. A heavenly day, great to be young and alive and free. After several hours of walking, we decided to rest and eat. We went off the highway into the fields. At first we thought of going to a farm but we decided to stretch out in the field and eat what we had taken along with us. And so we did. The smell was wonderful and inviting, and after eating, we napped for a while before we continued our hike. Towards dusk we decided to look for shelter for the night. For that purpose we entered the nearest farmhouse on the road and asked the farmer for permission to sleep in one of his barns. At first the farmer was reluctant but after some conversation which made him aware that we were Jews and former concentration camp inmates, he not only consented but invited us to supper with his family.

At the supper table, the topic of discussion, as expected, were the Nazi concentration camps, the mass murder of the Jews, Hitler and the German people. And also as expected, the farmer claimed ignorance, misinformation and fear, and condemned both Hitler and the atrocious acts. After supper the farmer led us to a barn full of hay where we retired for the night. The following morning the farmer's wife brought us milk and sandwiches and directed us towards the nearest train depot, from where, she said, we were bound to get transportation to Frankfurt. After some further walking we finally hit a small train depot, but upon inquiry with the railroad functionary we were told the passenger trains were practically non-existent for civilian use, and that only unscheduled freight trains stopped on the way to Frankfurt. Furthermore, he said, they were usually packed and unable to take any more passengers. In spite of this gloomy prediction, we decided to wait and try our luck. We went into the terminal waiting room and, indeed, we found people waiting already. We sat down for a while but soon moved out into the yard to be available quickly should a train arrive. This effort, however, was unnecessary. Because, after several hours of waiting, the crowd becoming increasingly larger, the yardmaster appeared and announed that a train would be passing by before long and ordered the tracks cleared. Hearing this, all the people in the waiting room moved outside to await the train. By the time it arrived the small platform, which in normal times probably served only few passengers, was fully packed with people trying to get to the front in order to squeeze onto one of the open boxcars. The regular cargo of these boxcars was coal for the sidewalls and the floor were still black. Yet none of the passengers that already packed the cars, nor the prospective passengers, seemed to be deterred from pushing, shoving and trying hard to get on. I and my friends

had no special difficulty in getting on and securing places for ourselves in one of those cars. Somehow, most of the waiting people had also managed to get on and before long the train was on its way. The uppermost thought in my mind, while the train was clicketing away under the open skies, the fresh air mixed with the dust of the countryside, was: Frankfurt am Main, here I come.

For the first time I was not only free but on my own, fending for myself. Although this type of traveling was by no means the most comfortable, it gave me an opportunity to view the German countryside and its surroundings and to see the extent of destruction that the Allied bombings had done in the course of the war. There was no object of importance that had not been hit, and very few houses were left untouched. After traveling all night, we arrived in Frankfurt around 10 in the morning. We got off at the main depot in Frankfurt and made our way towards the building that had once housed the beautiful waiting rooms, restaurants, etc. The structure was in total ruin except for improvised rooms and offices put together with the help of the skeletons of the still-existing walls. In spite of its appearance and lack of everything, the place was a beehive of people, civilian and military, people coming, going and waiting, and mostly waiting. Everywhere raggedy German soldiers, just released from prisoner of war camps, mostly wounded, without limbs, or sick, filled the place. What a pitiful sight was the great conqueror of yesteryear. The Red Cross and Travelers' Aid was directing them and helping them reach their destinations. When we inquired for help at the Red Cross we were directed to a group whose sole responsibility was to assist former concentration camp inmates. This group gave us some rations and provided us with shelter in a school, which was on the other side

of town, across the river Main.

Thus, sleepy and tired, we left the depot on our way to the school. The picture outside the depot was no different than that inside. We came out into a large square, surrounded by what once must have been the majestic tower of the terminal and other tall buildings, presumably hotels, offices and stores. Now the place looked devastated, with skeletons of walls sticking out like sores, pointing to the skies as a mark of past glory. Here and there some of the stores were back in operation, shabbily put together again, within the ruins. The stores, although open, had very little to sell. The square appeared like a market place full of people exchanging goods. With rucksacks with our belongings on our backs, we walked hastily through the streets of Frankfurt towards our place of shelter. The picture was the same on most streets we passed. Most of the houses were unlivable, yet Germans lived in the ruins or doubled up in the housing that was still intact. The city was completely without transportation except for bicycles. We came to a bridge which we had to cross. In their hasty retreat, the Germans had apparently dynamited the bridge, not destroying it completely, but only making a scramble of the wooden pillars holding the bridge together. Thus people walked through the bridge jumping from one pillar to the other to the other side. We too went through this exercise and, after some more walking, we came to the school which, for the next few days, would become our sleeping place.

We registered with the custodian who assigned us beds, pillowcases and blankets. The plumbing in the school was damaged or in disrepair so we washed ourselves, with the water provided by the custodian, and we went to sleep. When we woke up it was late in the afternoon and some of the people with whom we shared a converted classroom were there. Most of them were liberated Jews like ourselves. They told us that not far from the Bahnhof which is the train

terminal, a few blocks away, there was a Hotel, which had escaped destruction and where liberated Jews congregated. We were also told that an American Jewish chaplain had taken the Hotel under his auspices and was providing shelter to liberated Jews, and food and meals to all Jewish comers. All of them were getting ready to go there now and they suggested that we come along, that supper was being served there during evening hours. We were hungry and in need of a warm meal and we were anxious to meet and talk to other Jews. So we decided to join the others.

On the way, I questioned my new friends as to where they had been liberated and how they had happened to come to Frankfurt. In all cases, with some variations, the stories were similar to mine. They had come to Frankfurt ~~because~~ out of curiosity, a sense of adventure, and the desire to live in a large city. Like myself, they wanted to begin an individual, independent, life. Again we had to acrobatic our way across the bridge. But, before long, we were in the so called "D.P. Hotel". The place was teeming with liberated Jews and American Jewish military personnel. We were seated at tables covered with white tablecloths and served full meals, just as in a restaurant. Over the meal I exchanged words with others at the table as to how they had arrived at this juncture and what they contemplated doing. There seemed to be a general lack of information as to what would happen to us next. The vast majority had a burning desire to leave for Palestine immediately. This, however, was impossible since the government of Great Britain, the mandatory power over Palestine, still restricted Jewish immigration into Palestine. The discussion was continued after the meal and joined by the Americans, who expressed hope that the United States would persuade England to lift the restrictions. Furthermore, the Americans indicated, the U.S. Government

would probably allow a certain number of refugee immigrants, outside of the regular quotas, to enter the United States. In the meantime, all this was wishful thinking. These American soldiers were trying to be helpful in everyway they could, soothing in conversation our recent blows and holding out hope for a better future.

It was late at night when our gathering broke up. I came away with the impression that most of those with whom I had talked were not staying in Frankfurt but would move on to look for larger concentrations of Jews. I had a feeling that I too, would soon be moving on. When we returned to the school it was already very late, yet most of the people were still awake. Before I retired I engaged in more conversation with the others. We discussed the war in the Pacific, which was still going on, the efforts of the Jewish Agency to secure admittance of the Jewish D.P.s into Palestine, and the simultaneous activities of the Bricha, an underground Jewish organization to move Jews to Palestine by clandestine means. It was then that I first discovered that ships with Jews fortunate enough to have escaped the Nazis, had roamed the Mediterranean during the war and had not been allowed entrance into Palestine. They were eventually torpedoed by German U-boats, and perished on the sea. No wonder that feelings ran high against Britain among us for continuing this policy even now. There also came to light the general apathy of the democracies towards us during the war. While offers of exchange of Jews had been made, either for Germans or money, the Allies had never seriously pursued the effort. At no time had the Allies done anything or threatened reprisals for the killing of Jews. The one and only exception was the promise that those responsible for the atrocities would, at war's end, be brought to justice. The great hope of a just and unbiased humanity that we had harbored

in our hearts at the time of liberation was beginning to fade. .

The following day, as I was walking around downtown Frankfurt, I entered a bar to get a drink. The place was full of American G.I.s and officers. When the German bartender gave me my drink and I was about to leave the bar, one of the officers walked over to me and questioned me about the insignia that I had on my lapel. When I told him that this was the Jewish flag, he exclaimed: "I hate Jews." Whereupon I countered that he was not any different than the Nazis and that I hoped that he was well aware of what was happening to them. This really got him into a rage and he pulled out his pistol as if to shoot me. Whether he meant it or not, he really gave me a scare. The other soldiers, however, came over and pulled him away and my friends grabbed me and in seconds we were out in the street.

I was very nervous and shocked and it was some time before I regained my composure. The episode also shook my friends and further strengthened our belief that, while antisemitism had suffered some blows, especially as far as Germany was concerned, it was far from extinct.

For several days we went around Frankfurt and were frequent guests at the D.P. Hotel. But then we decided to move on. From the way it looked, final resettlement would not come for some time, especially since I desired to go to Palestine. The United Nations Relief and Rescue Organization had been set up and began to form D.P. camps. I was not interested in going into such a camp and besides, I wanted to work the bug of adventurism out of my system.

Our next destination was Bamberg. One nice morning we packed our few belongings in our rucksacks, bid goodbye to the school that had been our shelter for the past few days, and off we went to the Frankfurt bahnhoff.

At that bahnhoff we again waited for hours before we caught a freight train in the direction of Bamberg. Again the freight cars were open and again their usual previous cargo had been coal. I note this because, at the end of the trip, we looked like coal miners. On our way we passed trains going in the opposite direction, also full of people to capacity. Germany at that time was full of refugees of every description and people were moving in every direction despite the hardship, looking for relatives, resettlement, and adventures. These open freight cars were not very comfortable, with women and children packed together, yet the moon and dark skies at night, the sun and blue skies of the summer day, the frequent stops in towns and villages, made the journey pleasant and enjoyable. In the course of the voyage we also had to change trains. After two or three days we finally reached Bamberg, I and my two companions, on a beautiful summer morning.

When we stepped off the freight car onto the platform, we stood there for a moment and looked to each other as if to say: "now, what next?" We did not bother to go into the waiting rooms but cleared the iron door fence dividing the terminal from the street. Bamberg was a beautiful small town and, by comparison to other German cities, did not seem to have suffered as much destruction. We asked some passers-by for the location of the mayor and city hall. From the way we were dressed and spoke, we were quickly recognized as foreigners and, with typical German courtesy, we were not only directed but escorted by a German lady to the burgermeister. The City Hall, or Rathaus, was located on a big square, the market place.

The mayor received us courteously, and after checking our credential, supplied us with a certain amount of money, ration cards, and place to stay as long as we desired. For this purpose he gave us a letter to a church where, upon presentation, we were to receive our accommodations. To reach the church

we had to cross a bridge. But, unlike that in Frankfurt, this bridge was usable. By coincidence, the street where the church was located was called the Juden Strasse. All the streets in this part of town were very narrow, barely wide enough for a horse and buggy to pass through. The pavements were covered with cobblestones. The church itself was an old structure, a picture out of the middle ages. At the church we were met by a German clergyman, I believe to have been a priest. He welcomed us and invited us to the second floor, where he pointed to a clean room with three beds, which he said was ours for as long as we needed to stay. He then showed us to the bathroom on the same floor and left us to ourselves.

We were very tired so the only thing we did after we washed ourselves was to hit the much-longed-for clean sheets and comfortable beds. When we woke it was evening and the priest was in the doorway inviting us to have supper with him, which we readily accepted. The priest was a man in his fifties and very healthy-looking. He must have been in charge of the church for he had a number of rooms, including a dining room, all to himself. The table was fully served with plenty to eat. Again a conversation developed about the recent past and the priest, questioning us, seemingly interested to find out about our backgrounds and specific details about life in the ghettos and in the concentration camps. Although I answered his questions politely and in detail, I could not resist asking him where he had been as a representative of God, and where the conscience of the great civilized German people had been while our people were being butchered. Why did you not, and many more like you, for the sake of God, raise your voices to stop the atrocities. Unfortunately, the answer I got was the same I had received so many times before; "We did not know, we were lied to." There was not even an admittance of guilt, but rather, a basking in the self-righteousness that the church too had been exposed to heavy persecution.

The subject was quickly changed and our host tried to show off his knowledge of the Talmud. What he achieved, however, was to show that the only knowledge of the Talmud he possessed was a warped interpretation used by antisemites for generations to discredit the Jews. In spite of this I must admit that our host tried to be most courteous and friendly. It was late at night when we broke up. We returned to our room with full stomach but troubled at how deeply entrenched anti-Jewish convictions were.

The following day we took a tour of the city and found it very pleasant indeed. Across from the church where we stayed was a school which was occupied by American G.I.s. I spent many hours in the school talking with the soldiers. In the evenings in postwar Bamberg there was not much to do. We used, therefore, to take walks across the bridge and go to the City Hall Square where we met soldiers playing or just horsing around. We stayed in Bamberg for about a week or ten days. Over the whole period we had not once met another Jew. Word had reached us that a big Jewish D.P. camp was being organized in Feldafing. This was a small village in Baucaria not far from Munich. Eager to meet as many Jews as possible and stay close to the mainstream of Jewish action, we left Bamberg, bound southward. Again our means of travel were the open freight cars to which we could get only after long hours of waiting and pushing and shoving. Fortunately, it was in the height of the summer, when the weather does not get too cool, that we did our traveling. Fortunately too, we encountered very little rain. In many places where the train stopped I noticed people I thought to be Jews boarding the train, apparently trying likewise to get to Feldafing.

When we finally arrived in Feldafing the train terminal was reverberating with song and laughter from some young Jewish survivors waiting inside. The Jewish presence and atmosphere was felt immediately. We had arrived in

Feldafing in the late morning hours and after a few minutes of walking from the terminal, following others going to the camp, we made our way to the registry office. As I was waiting in line I could not help but notice that the inhabitants of the camp were all walking around in pajamas which was formerly part of the attire issued to the German soldiers who used to be based here. It was explained that upon registration at the camp among other things that everybody got pajamas, part of the bounty found in the local warehouses when the German army retreated. The three of us who had kept together since we had left Buchenwald were assigned to a barrack in the heart of the camp, not far from the camp kitchen and the administration buildings. Although a great many barracks were regular buildings of two or more floors, with regular dormitory rooms, the barrack to which I was assigned was a one-story, prefabricated, wooden structure. It was full of beds from one end to the other, and had very little space in which to walk about. I did not like this congestion, but, since I did not think for a minute that I would remain here, I made nothing of it. Besides, the satisfaction of my being together with so many Jews made this inconvenience unimportant. For the first time I also had the opportunity of meeting Jewish young girls, who, like myself had been in concentration camps, those for women, had survived the Nazis and now lived in the camp. So, dressed in my pajamas, I looked forward to a good rest in this Bavarian mountain village and lots of fun.

The D.P. camp of Feldafing which later became one of the biggest camps in the American Zone of Germany, had already a very good functioning Jewish administration and police when I arrived. It later became a great center of activity, culturally and politically, and very much instrumental in gaining the sympathy of world public opinion for the plight of the Jews in Europe

for immigration and the establishment of the State of Israel in particular. Junketing American and world statesmen and politicians did not feel fulfilled in their investigations if they did not visit the Feldafing D.P. camp. Likewise, the camp became host to numerous Jewish leaders from America and Palestine who brought hope and the resolve that the destiny of the Jews henceforth would not be left for others to determine but would remain in the hands of the Jews. Zionist organizations of every ideological persuasion sprang up. Meetings, debates and discussions became commonplace. Jewish theater, lectures, and a Jewish press followed shortly. The result was a greatly informed, proud and motivated, young, new Jewish generation.

However, all this had yet to come. For the present I had to satisfy myself with rest, conversation with American soldiers guarding inside the camp, brushing up my English, walks, social get-togethers with girls, plays and dances. After about ten days the camp life again seemed monotonous to me. In spite of leading a carefree life in complete freedom, camp life, by its own nature, requires at least a minimum of regimentation. I did not like it. I craved for independence. My restlessness grew every day. I decided to go to Munich, which was a half an hour ride by train, to look for work. I informed my two friends of my decision. When I asked if they would join me they seemed cool to the idea. The following day I was on my way to Munich, alone. The train that commuted between Feldafing and Munich was a regular passenger train that covered the stretch between the famous ski and resort place, Garmish-Partenkirchen, at the foot of the Alps, and Munich. I arrived in Munich at the Starnberger Bahnhof, adjoining the main Munich Terminal, which, like most terminals in major German cities, was in ruins. Only improvisation within the remaining walls of the bombed out structures made the depots operative.

For a minute I remained standing on the platform, not knowing where to go. But soon I noticed other young Jews coming off the train. Some were no strangers to Munich. They had come to visit the Deutsches Museum, a meeting place for newly arrived Jews and a center for information about surviving Jews from all over Europe. I quickly joined them to go to the Deutsches Museum. We made our exit into the Bahnhof Platz, a big square adjoining the Terminal, to wait for a street car going to the Museum. When the street car finally arrived it was filled to capacity, some even hanging outside holding on to a door handle or onto another passenger. It did not seem possible that I would be able to get on, even though some of the passengers got off when the street car came to a stop. However, after a push here and a shove there, I squeezed on. By the time the streetcar arrived at the Museum I was deep inside the street car fighting to get out. The Museum, like most major structures in Munich, had been heavily damaged during the war. Nevertheless, some of the rooms were now functioning as offices.

When I got there the place was a beehive of young Jewish men and women, coming and going. Although I knew the fate of my immediate family, I checked the lists of known survivors for possible relatives and friends. Unfortunately, I found not a single name of even a friend on the lists. I roamed among the crowd to see if I could find somebody that I might have known. But my efforts were fruitless. I then, instead, concentrated on meeting people living in Munich who could provide me with temporary shelter. It was not long before I met a guy who shared a room with a friend in Freiman, a Munich suburb. They were sub-renting the room from a German family. When I told him that I had come from Feldafing and that I was looking for a way to get out of the

camp, he said that he too had been in Feldafing and had, only a week ago, been taken in by his friend, that he was still not doing anything, and that he was receiving assistance. His friend, however, had established himself in an exchange service, exchanging valuables which he had received from Germans whom he had befriended, for food and money with American soldiers at a nearby base. When I told him that I spoke some English, he was sure that I could get a job with the Americans stationed at the base, called the Freiman Kaserne. At this point he was more enthusiastic than I was, for he called me a natural and a sure bet to be hired by the Americans, so much so that he invited me to come with him and, for as long as necessary, to stay with him and his friend. I quickly accepted the invitation and, after spending a few more hours at the Museum, I was with my newly made friend waiting for a streetcar going in the direction of Freiman. The streetcar was again packed and when we got off at the end of the line, Freiman was still about an hour's walk away.

In normal days buses had operated between Freiman and the streetcar line. But the lack of buses and fuel left Germans no alternative in these days but to curtail this vital service. It meant nothing for me and my friend to make the walk for we were used to it and it gave me an opportunity to observe a part of Munich. When we came to the house it was late in the afternoon. My friend ushered me into the room and introduced me to his friend, the actual tenant of the room. Whereas the friend who had brought me here was slightly older than I, the man in the room struck me as a still older gentleman, in the late forties. He welcomed me warmly and offered to share everything they had with me. This feeling was then a typical one among Jewish survivors. The persecutions and sufferings had created a link of brotherhood and comradeship.

My older friend then proceeded to prepare food for supper, after which we just sat around the table and exchanged our wartime experiences. The following day I went in the morning to the gate of the Freiman Kaserne and engaged the American guard there in a conversation. I told him that I was a survivor of the German concentrations camps and that I was in dire need of a job. The base was predominantly occupied by black outfits of the Quartermaster and some white companies of the Ordinance. The guard I talked to at the gate was black and he seemed impressed with my story. He called out another soldier from the guardhouse, which was next to the gate, and told him to take me into the office and introduce me to the sergeant of the guard, which he did. The sergeant was a young man in his middle twenties. After listening to my story and seeing my desire to work in the office, he politely explained that he was in charge of the office in the guardhouse which regulates the gate and also has jurisdiction over inmate soldiers who are kept locked up in the basement of the guardhouse for short periods for minor offenses, that he had no need for any office help, yet, he would like for me to stay. He paused for a moment, thought, and asked if I would care to serve as his assistant and interpreter. I, too, was only twenty-two years old at the time, and a uniform and the title appealed to me very much. I not only agreed but I went to work right away.

*The sergeant outfitted me with a U.S. uniform and immediately gave me some errands to run. For lunch he gave me a military mess kit and canteen and had me join him at the mess hall inside the base. This was my first G.I. lunch and, although served on a mess kit, cafeteria style, it consisted of several dishes, including meat, and other delicacies, and as much as I desired. There was, indeed, no comparison to the food dished out in the D.P. camps and

the diets available to the Germans on ration cards. Although I had no special sympathy for the Germans, and all things being equal, the American military occupation was much more humane than if the reverse had been the case. Nevertheless, I felt very bad when I saw half-consumed and practically untouched food winding up in the waste cans, especially with so many hungry people around. For the rest of the day I accompanied the sergeant who showed me around the base, introducing me to other soldiers. He also equipped me with an identity card so I might be able to come and go from the base as I pleased.

In the evening, after chow on the base, I went back to the room to my friends whom I had left that morning, carrying my civilian clothes under one arm and delicacies and food under the other. When I appeared before them in the American uniform they could not believe the sight, so happy they were with my being able to get the job. On the week end I went back to Feldafing, dressed in my uniform, to pick up my personal belongings. My envious friends would have probably been receptive at that time to coming along with me. But I never made the suggestion owing to the fact that I did not want to take the responsibility of accommodations for them. Lacking my encouragement, they assumed a posture of total satisfaction with living in Feldafing among their own and enjoying the sight and companionship of many young girls in the camp, with more arriving daily from Eastern Europe and from all over Germany. Indeed, living in the camp had its advantages. I did enjoy the weekend there, and being in uniform put a special spotlight on me. Nonetheless, I felt I could have the best of both worlds. I could have my independence in Munich and enjoy Feldafing on weekends.

When I returned to my new house in Munich, the younger of my hosts was

not there. I was told by my older friend, that he had left and that he was not coming back, that he had received good news of a relative-survivor and he had decided to join him. My friend then offered to share the room with me on a permanent basis. The job on the base I enjoyed very much, meeting new soldiers and making new friends. However, except for hanging around in the office and accompanying the sergeant, there really was nothing for me to do. After several weeks the sergeant confided to me that my job was not official, that the officer in charge had found out about my presence and had ordered my removal, to avoid complications from his higher ups. He further revealed that for the past few days he had inquired with different units on the base as to their need for an interpreter and office worker. One such unit was an ordinance company, which was responsible for the maintenance of all trucks, jeeps, wreckers and moving equipment, on the base. To help them in this the unit had a number of German PWs and civilian employees come into the base every morning to work in its garages. The commanding officer of the company expressed a desire to talk to me for possible use of any knowledge of German in instructing the German employees as well as working in the office. The sergeant was apologetic for not revealing the facts to me before and for undertaking efforts in my behalf without my knowledge and approval. I told this gentle soul that, quite to the contrary, I was very*appreciative of his efforts. He told me that the unit by which I would be employed, in contrast to his, was all white and that my interview with the officer of the company was no more than a formality and that he was assured of the job for me on an official basis.

The following day my sergeant drove me down in his jeep to the office headquarters of the ordinance unit and introduced me to the officer in charge. A brief interview followed, at after which I was told to report to work the

following morning. I thought that on this job I would be expected to put in an eight-hour workday. But, although my employment was official, my work in the office was limited to typing a few official rules translated from English into German. I spent some of my time in the garage of the company talking to the German PW and civilian employees. The rest of my time I spent with a corporal in charge of the Post Office, assisting him in picking up the mail and packages from the main military Post Office in Munich and in its distribution among the G.I.s. In spite of my duties I had much time left to do as I pleased. This gave me the opportunity to become very friendly with most of the enlisted men and officers of the company. In my spare time I joined my G.I. friends on trips to downtown Munich and places of interest. In the evenings after dinner I went along to places of entertainment reserved for American soldiers. There was dancing topped off by a snack at the American Red Cross quarters in downtown Munich. I spent very little time at home, coming home late at night and returning to the base in the morning for early chow call. I did not stay very long with this company but I really enjoyed every minute of it. I improved my English tremendously and there was no place in Munich that was unfamiliar to me within a short time. In the suburb of Freiman where I lived I became known as the American, who speaks German. Before I left the company I arranged in the neighboring beer hall for nightly entertainment and dances for G.I.s on the base.

On weekends I continued my visits to Feldafing. On one such visit I met a guy, who later became a close friend of mine and responsible for my meeting the girl who later became my wife. When I told him about my work in the military base, he queried me about the possibility of obtaining employment in tailoring for the officers and enlisted men. I invited him to come along with me, to stay in my room that I shared, and, within a few days, I assured

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him of a job. Before I even had a chance to finish the sentence, he accepted my invitation. My roommate, as I had expected, was approvingly happy about the new arrival and, as he had when I first arrived, kindly offered all the help possible. Within a few days I succeeded in obtaining work for my new friend. Shortly after I was on my new job in the Ordinance Company, about a month to six weeks later, I was informed that a Labor Supervision Company, consisting of a captain and several enlisted men, in charge of administration and security of a German P.W. Camp not far from the base, was looking for an interpreter. Looking for a chance to be in authority over Germans or a chance to influence authority as well as having the opportunity of learning first hand how German psyche responded to imprisonment and deprivation, a very gentle captivity at that, something that they had been dishing out in abundance, I applied for the job immediately.

Within a few days I was, for all practical purposes, in complete charge of the P.W. Camp. The captain and the enlisted men administered the camp through me and my influence in general policymaking I had in the very beginning made felt to the utmost. When I first appeared on the scene the curfew within the camp was very lax. I tightened it up considerably. When I compared the diet of the PWs with the way the Germans had fed us and the diet the German civilians enjoyed now, the PWs, except for lack of freedom, might just as well have been in some special feeding resort. Although the size of the ration for the PWs was not set by local camp administrators, I have nevertheless succeeded in withholding a part of the diet. For the world of me I could not understand why the American military made real coffee available to the German PWs. When I told the captain what the Germans gave us to drink, that the coffee had been simply darkened water, he agreed to withhold the

coffee from them. At every step of the way I told the PWs how they had done it to others and especially to Jews, and asked them how they would like to be treated the same way. My revenge, if one may call it that, was short-lived, however, for I mellowed quickly.

I came to realize soon that the few hundred Germans in this camp, no matter how they have felt about Nazism before, the war battles, the captivity, and my presence had had an impact on them. I saw them as no different than any other people under the same circumstances. Of course, at no time were they, as we had been, under a constant threat of being executed. Thus, their anxieties and pressures were never the same. Our hope of surviving and gaining freedom was at best marginal. They knew that they would be free soon as their unit's turn for discharge came about and their individual discharge papers processed. Another operation in which I took part with some revenge was the requisitioning of a mansion of a German Nazi for the captain and crew for living quarters. He was a former judge and a big shot in the Nazi hierarchy. Remembering how the Germans had entered our homes and apartments at will and ordering us out, allowing us to take along only what we could carry with us, I asked the captain to give me the orders to secure the mansion so that I could confront the German Nazi personally.

I drove up in a jeep with two G.I.s one afternoon to the gate of the mansion. I rang the bell and a servant woman appeared. I told her to open the gate so that we could drive into the yard for we wanted to come into the house to speak to the owner. She obediently opened the gate and allowed us into the house. After a few seconds of waiting, the lady of the house and a young man appeared before us, somewhat disturbed, apparently suspecting our mission. As I was standing in the entrance with the other two soldiers, I asked for her husband, to which she replied that she was unaware of his

whereabouts. I knew then that I would never be able to confront the real big shot of the Nazi hierarchy. I felt somewhat cheated and I pursued, inquiring when he was last at home. She gave me an evasive answer that others were looking for him, implying that he was either in hiding or in jail. I thus proceeded with giving her our credentials and the order, explaining that tomorrow at this time she must be out of the house for I would be back to take possession of it. I made known to her that she must take nothing with her except her personal belongings. In the event of non-compliance she would be forcibly removed, I told her. Upon hearing this she stood for a second, speechless and electrified. I watched her anxiety on her face and I remembered my parent's and my fellow Jews' agony. The son made some kind of remark, implying cruelty on my part, that they would not be able to meet the deadline. I told him in German that I had not come to exchange niceties, that I had personally lived through situations like this when they were the masters, that they had much to be thankful for because, by contrast, the Nazis had harmed their victims physically, that their mansion would eventually be returned to them, that there was no threat to their lives and no need to fear winding up in the gas chambers.

When we returned the following day some Germans hired by the owner were still removing some of the belongings. I did not interfere. But then the son came back for what I thought was a last check. When I asked him what he wanted he became quite sharp with me and pointed to some expensive china that he wanted to take with him. I picked up the box threw it out the window and ordered him off the premises. A few days later our unit moved into the mansion. I too spent a lot of my time here but never moved in completely because I was reluctant to leave my two friends with whom I shared the room in Freiman. The mansion was being kept up by the PWs, who did all

the chores of housekeeping as well as cooking. My tailor friend whom I had brought with me from Feldafing, after a short time had become quite well-settled, working for the soldiers, earning some money, cigarettes and chocolate, which he put to good use in buying himself new clothing and other essentials. He really appreciated me and became my very best friend. I took him along wherever I went and, outside of my duties at the PW camp and some personal social commitments that I had, we spent our time together. As often as possible we went together to the Feldafing D.P. camp and socialized there. This continued until January, 1946. The units that my friend served had suddenly been transferred and the German PW camp was soon to be liquidated and the PWs returned to their families.

As it happened my friend had been looking for an apartment for both of us for some time and applied for one through the German housing authorities in Munich. Because of the destruction, housing for civilians was hard to obtain. Still, before the year end of 1945, he was assigned an apartment to be shared with two German girls, whose husbands were in Soviet captivity. The apartment was very nice and the room much bigger than the one we shared, three of us, heretofore. Besides, there was a hall and a kitchen we could use if we desired. My friend and I thus made the move. The new apartment was halfway between the military base and the mansion and not too far from the PW camp. My friend could easily walk to the base to pick up work and I had no difficulty reaching the places of my work. Thanksgiving, Christmas 1945, and New Year's, 1946, I spent with my soldier friends. Thanksgiving, especially, I enjoyed very much even though it was an American national holiday. For I was already very Americanized and, even though I contemplated immigrating to what was then Palestine, I lived, thought and felt like an American. Besides, I had much to be thankful for. After all, I had survived

the greatest cataclysm of mankind and was looking forward with great hope to recreate a new family for myself and the rebirth of a home for the Jewish people in Palestine. Also, the American Thanksgiving holiday is not so unique where we Jews are concerned, and we felt very much at home celebrating it with full zest. In January of 1946, after the units left that my friend had obtained work from, it became harder for him to get work. He thus spent more time in the apartment, making it more comfortable for both of us. He also had more time to spend on recreation and visiting the Deutsches Museum in Munich where Jews congregated.

Although the PW camp was soon to be liquidated, my unit was scheduled to take over the Supervision of Polish para-military units, which had been organized shortly before war's end, made up of Polish laborers forcibly brought to Germany by the Germans and who now refused to be repatriated to Poland. These Polish outfits were to be utilized as guards over American military and civilian installations. Being a native of Poland, and having a perfect knowledge of the Polish language, I was asked to stay on with the American unit to serve as interpreter and liaison to the Polish units. A couple months later we simply moved our company office into a camp of Polish soldiers in the vicinity. Here too there was a satisfying experience for me, to be in authority over the Poles. In Poland before the war, with anti-semitism rampant, not only would they not have taken too easily to the authority of a Jew, but would not have tolerated it.

I wondered, therefore, how the Polish officers and their men would take to me, knowing that I was Jewish. The relationship at first, although courteous, was reserved and cool. Knowing my countrymen, with their ingrained hatred for Jews, I made it unmistakably clear to them that I was Jewish and proud of it. My duties consisted of making up the morning reports for the American company

and checking the morning reports of the Polish units. I sat in on meetings of the Captain and Polish officers and accompanied the Captain on inspection of the Polish units. The Polish commanding officer of the camp spoke very little English and was, therefore, very much dependent on me to translate his frequent requests to my Captain. Under these circumstances he could not very long disregard me and soon became very friendly. He even invited me to his home which he had made outside the camp with his wife. After I had gained his confidence, I did not spare him in failing to tell him about our "good old times" in Poland. I did not hesitate to remind him that while, in the middle thirties, Hitler was invading Austria and Czeschoslovakia and planning the same for Poland, the Polish parliament was busying itself with drafting anti-Jewish legislation rather than drafting national defense measures. The Jewish question was constantly on the agenda and speaker after speaker in those circus deliberations pictured the Jew in the most terrible terms. As a matter of fact, Streicher and Goebbels could very easily have taken some lessons in Jew-baiting from the Polish parliament. This created an intolerable atmosphere for the Jews in prewar Poland. We were not safe in the streets nor in our homes. Whereas in Germany, Jewish businesses were expropriated, in Poland, Jewish businesses were picketed daily by organized mobs, thus creating financial hardship and, in many cases, complete ruin. I reminded him of our status as second-class citizens, not being able to aspire for office, attend higher school nor advance in the military. Had the war not come, I told him, our position in Poland at best would have been a very precarious one. And then, I asked, after Hitler had invaded Poland, how many more of us could have been saved if not for the almost complete cooperation of the Polish people with the Nazis.

As much as I had waited for this opportunity to speak openly and frankly, to unburden my heart and soul, I also tried to do it as gently as possible. For even though my indictment was directed at Poland as a whole, he was the one facing me across the table and he was very uncomfortable. To lessen the impact I praised the many Poles, who, while endangering their own lives, had helped save Jews and especially, Jewish children. It was a sobering experience for my Polish friend, who, while attempting to point out the good things about Jewish-Polish relations, was generally apologetic. As for our present relationship, it became less reserved, much freer and open. We became really good friends.

In late January, 1946, while I was still working at the PW camp, on one of my evenings home, I found my friend in the company of two girls. The event would have been unimportant and not worth mentioning, for we had often female guests in our house, except that these two girls were, like ourselves, survivors, who were living now in Feldafing at the DP camp, and, while visiting Munich, had stopped in to see him and except that three months later, these two girls became our wives. My friend had mentioned to me before that, on one of his excursions to the Deutsches Museum, he had met a girl of his native town, Sosnovice, and she had advised him that the girl that he used to date before the war was living with her together in her sister's house. She had extended an invitation to him to come to their house so he could meet his prewar date. My friend did not wait long before he visited her in Feldafing, renewed an old friendship, and subsequently, invited both girls to visit him in Munich.

That evening, for some reason, I felt tired and not disposed to entertain company. Thus, after the introductions and exchange of courtesies, I went out into the kitchen and conversed for a while with one of the girls, co-renters

of the house, as she was fixing me tea. When I returned to the room I entertained a conversation with my friend and the girls for sheer politeness. I was unimpressed, and, at no time, did matrimony cross my mind. When the girls had left, my friend kept quizzing me about what I thought of his girl friend. In a joking fashion, I asked which of his girl friends he was talking about. But he persisted in a serious tone which left no doubt that he was seriously interested in the girl of his prewar days. He explained to me, that while he had only occasionally dated her in Poland, he now felt a love for her. In the days ahead, he kept telling me about how lonely he felt and about his need and desire to create a family. He went on with a constant barrage of questions of how I liked the other girl, extolling her virtues and family background. He kept this on to such a point that I told him to stop it, that I was not ready for marriage. The thought of serious involvement was, nevertheless, planted in my mind and soon I found myself pursuing it and asking questions that eventually led me to betrothal and marriage.

On the following weekend, when we went to Feldafing, my friend spent the time with his new-found love. I too, in contrast to my regular schedule whenever I visited the camp, intended this weekend to spend most of my time with the other girl. However, when I greeted her on arrival, I had a feeling that she was giving me a cold reception, which prompted me, after a while, to leave. On my way to the center of the camp, I could not get it out of my mind how this girl had snubbed me, and I became determined to make this young lady like me. I worked out a scheme whereby, before I left Feldafing I should have a firm date with her for the following weekend. I spent most of that day in the camp proper. But I left myself ample time when I returned to pick up my friend so as to engage the girl in a private conversation.

Apparently, she felt that my behavior in Munich, when she had visited us, was less than cordial. I apologized to her, and although I was making progress, she was not exactly embracing me. She was very sensitive but also very beautiful in all her expressions. However, when we left Feldafing, I had a firm date with her for the coming weekend in her house.

This was the beginning of a constant preoccupation in my mind with the girl whom I courted and fell in love with and who became my companion for life. This was also the beginning of many dates, meetings and discussions. I told her about my background and how I had survived the war. She told me about her father before the war had derived a life for his wife and six children from harness making in Sosnovice, Poland. Although not rich, they had lived in relative comfort. She said that her father had been a master in his trade and thus very much in demand and very respected. Her brother, the oldest in the family, had married during the war and had had a baby from this marriage who had perished in one of the concentration camps. Her young sister-in-law and baby had been killed in Auschwitz. Her other brother, the youngest of the family had also met his death, together with her parents, in Auschwitz. She had survived the war in a Sudetengau, Czeschoslovakia labor camp, working twelve hours a day in one of the many loom factories there. She had been freed by the Russians and had subsequently returned to her native city in Poland. Unable to stay in the land where the ground was soaked with Jewish blood and where antisemitism was rampant, even after the war, even after six million dead, she had left for the American Zone of Germany and made her temporary home in the D.P. Camp in Feldafing. Our backgrounds were indeed quite similar and we had a lot in common.

In the weeks that followed, I did a lot of soul searching and had many discussions with my friend about the girl I loved. My girlfriend had two

older married sisters who lived together in Feldafing and also a teenage younger sister. I observed them all and I liked what I saw. So, one weekend, out on a stroll with my girl in Feldafing I asked her for her hand in marriage. It did not exactly come to her as a surprise and she later confided that she had thought about it a great deal prior to my asking her. But at the moment all she did was express a great deal of fondness for me and promise to give me an answer shortly. A week later my friend and I were making preparations for marriage.

On April 11, 1946, the first anniversary of my liberation, I and my friend got up early in the morning, for we both had a most important date of our lives, one that would make a tremendous impact on our future, but, at the same time, one that we embraced voluntarily. Although I had made the decision weeks ago, I did some last minute soul searching and prayed that I had made the right choice. My thoughts were filled with memories about my parents, my brother and sister. How would they have reacted to my impending marriage? I had a feeling that, were they alive now, they would not only give their unqualified consent but that they would be most happy and proud for me and my chosen bride. I was convinced that if my parents could have spoken to me now they would have applauded my decision and bless me to bring on a new generation of proud Jews. I thought about how close to death I had come when I had arrived in the concentration camp from Buchenwald and how the doctor from my native city had recognized me and, seeing my condition, had quickly picked me out to be returned to Buchenwald. I saw it now as a sheer miracle. I thought about the deportations and the last glance at my mother and sister and the look on their faces as we were separated, about the last goodbye to my father at the Metalurgia when I left for Hasag Peltzery, when, with tears in his eyes, he had willed me to be strong and persevere,

wishing me good luck. I remembered the day when my brother had left me in the morning, never to return. Since I was a year his senior, I tried to picture him on my wedding day and wondered about his reactions. I also thought of the many "selections" that I had survived and read into this the hand of God. I knew then that what I was about to do was right if my life was to have any purpose.

The day of the wedding was a Sunday and, although windy, was sunny and a nice spring day. The wedding had been scheduled for the evening but we had planned to be in Feldafing, where the wedding was to take place, in the afternoon. We dressed up in our best attire and, at about eleven o'clock, we were waiting at the Starnberger Bahnhof in Munich, waiting for the train to take us to Feldafing. On the train I tried to engage my friend in conversation but I gave up when I realized that he would prefer to be left to his own thoughts, pretending to nap. The train to Feldafing was always filled, mainly with Jews, commuting between Munich and the camp. Thus I talked to other Jews sitting in the compartment, engaging them in small talk about the weather, housing conditions in the Feldafing D.P. camp which had worsened due to an enormous influx of new arrivals. But soon, Feldafing was upon us and everybody hurried to get off. After getting out of the terminal my friend and I made our way to Villa Kaiser, the residence of my bride's sisters, where the wedding had been scheduled to take place later in the evening.

When we arrived in the afternoon, our brides were waiting for us and filled us in on all the details. The house had been cleared of all the furniture and tables had been set up to accommodate all the guests. The sisters and brother-in-laws of my bride were busying themselves cooking and preparing specialties in honor of the wedding. For the rest of the day there was nothing for me to do but wait until sundown when the first guests would

arrive. Soon after, my two friends, who had been companions all the way from Buchenwald until we had separated in Feldafing, came as guests of mine and also to serve as witnesses on the marriage contract. In the evening, when most of the guests were already present, a Rabbi from the camp arrived. He was a Lithuanian Jew, himself a survivor. Upon his arrival, my friend and I, and my two former friends, went to the second floor, where the Rabbi, in the presence of other males, wrote our marriage contracts. It was accompanied by singing, toasting and general merrymaking. With this ceremony over, we returned to the first floor where everything was already prepared for the actual wedding ceremony. My friend, being older, was first to be married. I waited in the wings.

Then it was my turn under the "Chupa" or canopy. That I was nervous goes without saying. In spite of the large gathering of guests and the festive, happy, atmosphere, I felt very lonely. For my father and mother were not here and I was missing them very much. I wished then I could have cried but in those days I could not give in to crying very easily. My bride was beautiful and, after uttering of the traditional sentence of betrothal, we were pronounced husband and wife. The Rabbi continued the blessing, then came the sip of wine, my breaking of a glass, and a kiss to my bride. And then the real celebration began. There was singing and dancing, and my in-laws had hired an orchestra from Starnberg to add to the occasion. Late at night, when it had all ended, I wound up sharing my bed, not only with my bride, but with several other people. Many guests who had come to the wedding from far away remained sleeping with us. So the floor was lined with people and the available beds had to accommodate as many as possible. The following morning, after an early breakfast, bidding good-bye to my newly acquired relatives and friends, I was with my wife, my friend and his wife, on our way

back to Munich.

Back in the apartment in Munich, the place till now shared by two men, had to be shared by two newlywed couples. And difficulties were bound to arise in spite of the close friendship. And arise they did. I continued working every day, leaving my wife all day at the apartment. My friend, on the other hand, not only did not work, but stopped completely looking for work or for any means to make a living. He thus spent all the time with his wife, at home or out having a good time. Since I was the sole provider of a living for both couples, the scarcity of space in the apartment plus the conditions I just described did not take long to make tempers rise and a close friendship to chill. Heated words were exchanged first between the girls, then all of us were affected.

My inquiries for a separate apartment for me and my wife quickly became a desperate search. After several weeks of intensive looking, we finally found a second floor room in a private house in the Freiman area. With our moving to the new place and splitting up with our friends, a friendship that took months and years to cement, a friendship that had resulted in two marriages, was broken completely. It was a painful episode for me as it was for my wife and I am sure it was for our friends too. It was not until many years later that we realized the insignificance of the feud over which our friendship had been broken, that, while visiting in New York, we travelled to Montreal, Canada, where they then resided, to reunite and spend time with them. The healing of the rift was complete, but the friendship that had once existed among us was never restored.

Moving to the new quarters also had its advantages for us. For the first time we had complete privacy and could settle down to plan our life. While I

was at work my wife used to go downtown Munich to acquire things needed for a regular household. In the evenings we usually went out to visit friends. Trips to Munich in the evening consumed a lot of time. And, consequently, on many occasions, we entertained Jewish military whom I had befriended in the course of my service with the American armed forces. One particular such man from New York became a frequent visitor to our house, close friend and a kind of family advisor. In those days, my wife and I were convinced that our eventual settlement should be in Palestine. He advised strongly that we not waste our time and instead register for immigration to the United States. On weekends and holidays we travelled to Feldafing to spend time with my in-laws, my wife's sisters and their husbands. Feldafing was particularly beautiful in the summer, especially where my in-laws lived. With the green lawns surrounding the house, the fresh air and the summer sun it looked and felt like a summer resort. We enjoyed our weekends and holidays with our relatives very much, so much so that quite often I regretted to leave.

In the meantime, more than a year had passed since the end of war and our liberation. The high hopes and expectations that had permeated us at war's end, that the world would, at long last, be kind to us and receptive to our needs, remained so much wishful thinking. The hope for quick resettlement, free immigration to Palestine, where our brethren wanted us and craved for us, a new life with dignity and peace, free from oppression, was still a part of us. But we knew now that these basic things would not be accorded us unless we fought for them. Although the world was persecuted by guilt feelings, it remained, in the main, unperturbed with our plight. Except for the creation of the United Nations Rescue and Relief Agency to care for the displaced person camps, the world community had done nothing to resolve our problems, politically or in any other way.

Great Britain had persisted with its pre-war "white book", restricting Jewish immigration to Palestine. Unthinkable as it was, pleas by world Jewry, the United States and the world humanitarians, went unheeded. The United Kingdom still put political expediency ahead of Jewish life. In Poland, in the city of Kielce, the few returning Jews from concentration camps had been treated to a post-war pogrom that had left a number killed and wounded. It meant nothing to the instigators and the mob that they were attacking a trickle of survivors, who had gone through five years of hell and barely made it, that the scars were still fresh, that the stench of the flesh, of the gas chambers and crematories still filled the air, that they were innocent and had done nothing to warrant the rage and fury of the mob. All that had mattered was that they were Jews and they were coming back to build new lives and live in their midst. No government was ready to give unrestricted entry to Jewish displaced persons for resettlement and under no circumstances could the bulk of the surviving Jews remain in the Jewish blood-soaked lands of Germany and Europe. Thus the Jews in the camps of Germany and Austria which, were crowded to capacity, had settled down for a long stay which was filled with intensive political activity, mixed with illegal movement of Jews to Palestine and a campaign of violence against the mandatory power in Palestine. Soon enough, the question of the Jews and Palestine became the most burning item on the world agenda. In Munich, a Central Committee of liberated Jews in the American Zone of Germany was formed to deal with the American Military authorities governing Germany on everything that had to do with all aspects of life and welfare of the Jewish displaced persons. Likewise, the Central Committee was the spokesman for all the Jews, first with the emerging local German authorities, and later with the German Government. The HIAS and JDC opened offices in Munich to register Jews for resettlement in the U.S.A. and

other western countries where some had relatives. While these offices laid the groundwork and prepared for mass movement of immigrants, the home offices were hard at work promoting the easing of restrictions and for special emergency legislation. The Jewish Agency for Palestine, with its office in Munich, was likewise hard at work processing and preparing people for immigration once the gates of Palestine were opened. This was the Jewish scene in 1946, in Munich. A disappointment and a realization that resettlement would be slow at best, that Palestine would have to be won with more tears and blood. The determination, nevertheless, was growing daily among Jews here and all over the world, that this time, we must prevail.

Meanwhile, the Germans of Munich in 1946 were still a war-ravaged people and Munich, like most cities in Germany, hardly had begun to clear the ruins away. And, in late September, 1946, my wife alluded to suspicions of pregnancy. Outwardly, I expressed no concern to my wife and dismissed her suspicion as mistaken and improbable. In reality the news hit me like a ton of bricks. I hoped she was wrong for I was not ready, psychologically or financially, to deal with a baby, especially before being permanently settled. We decided that on our next trip to Feldafing she would undergo an examination by the Jewish camp doctor. I was so preoccupied with the thought of my wife's possible pregnancy that I could hardly wait for the weekend. But, like anything else, the weekend came, the examination took place and the doctor established that her suspicions were justified. By the time I was informed about it, I was already prepared for every eventuality and had made peace with the idea of becoming a father. When my wife hinted, in her breaking her news to me, of a possible abortion, I expressed a violent opposition to even the thought of it. For what I feared more than having a baby was exposing

my wife to possible harm and death. I thus began to espouse to my wife the benefits of our having a baby now. The chance of being young parents and growing with the child, the joy and happiness which each baby brings with itself and certainly, what must have been the wish and the desire of our parents, that we recreate ourselves as soon as possible.

Thus we settled down to await our first-born. In the months ahead we decided that we must change our residence for a better location. It was getting too hard for my wife, on our trips to Feldafing and back, to walk the distance from our house to the streetcar line which took about twenty minutes, especially in the freezing weather in November and later. We hoped to find a place in Munich. My work as liaison to the Poles did not appeal to me any longer and there was frequent talk that the Polish units were soon to be dismantled and abolished. So, I decided to look for new employment. In the early 1947, after weeks of effort, my wife secured new housing on Hohenzollern Strasse in the Schwabing area of Munich, and I became an office employee of HIAS.

In the beginning I was assistant to a man in charge of the search for relatives, answering inquiries for people locally and for those in the nearby camps who requested help in the locating and search for possible relatives in the United States, South America and other countries. I quickly managed, however, to come to the attention of the director of the office, who was an American. He quickly elevated me to the most important department in the office, Immigration to U.S.A., first as an assistant, and then as department head. This was after President Truman's executive order allowing 100,000 immigrants into the United States over the regular quota. Everyday the place was practically full with people standing in line to be registered for

immigration to America. What followed was that my office was swamped with the processing of the many applications and with facilitating the many examinations of the applicants with the American Consulate. As I became more expert with the particular requirements of the American Consulate in Munich, people tried desperately to seek me out for counsel and advice. Physically, it was impossible for me to see all the people who usually came to see me, despite my desire to do so and my inclination to do a conscientious job. As the numbers of applicants grew, the numbers of those with special difficulties being held up by the American Consulate for various reasons, grew too, I had, by necessity, to restrict myself to seeing only those with the special problems.

The job was fulfilling and very rewarding to me for I saw it as an opportunity to help my fellow Jews and holocaust survivors. As for myself, I was still of the opinion that I should immigrate to Palestine rather than to the United States. Then, in the early part of 1947, I began feeling frequent discomforts in my stomach, with acid indigestion and loss of appetite. Although it did not prevent me from functioning sufficiently, either on the job or at home, it worried me and my wife greatly. I underwent several physical examinations and was advised by doctors to eat only baby food and milk. Though they were not sure, they suspected a stomach ulcer. I usually ate three meals a day at the HIAS mess hall especially provided for HIAS officers. I had to discontinue the practice. I was, instead, given per diem money which financially proved to be more profitable to me than the meals. But, although on a strict diet, my stomach difficulties did not ease very much. A new doctor with whom I was acquainted had prescribed a liquid that he mixed together by himself which I had thought originally was helping me. In the meantime, we had become settled in our new and larger quarters which we shared with two

German older women who were sisters. Except for the ordinary daily salutations on accidental passings, I had very little to do with them. My wife, who spent much more time at home, on the other had², had frequent conversations with them. However, she didn't draw very close to them. Nevertheless, we enjoyed our apartment and spent many happy hours there together. The apartment was very comfortable, situated on the fourth floor of a big building, centrally located. If we cared to go anywhere all we had to do was go down in front of the house and catch a streetcar in any direction.

My wife's pregnancy, in the meantime, was progressing very satisfactorily. We planned to have my wife deliver in Feldafing under the supervision of a Jewish doctor. We also hoped to be able to get an apartment in Feldafing so that my wife could remain there with the baby as long as necessary. We now looked forward to the happy day with anticipation. I secretly hoped that my first born would be a boy, especially because my two brothers-in-law were boasting about their new-born baby boys. On the last weekend in May, when we travelled to Feldafing, we expected to remain there until the baby was born. On June 1st, 1947, in the afternoon, my wife asked me to take her to the improvised maternity hospital in downtown Feldafing. Her pains had become frequent and persistent, spelling an early arrival. When we came to the hospital the doctor was not there and the midwife on duty took her in and cared for her. She told us that the baby might not arrive for some hours. She tried to make my wife as comfortable as possible. For the rest of the day and late evening I remained with my wife. I hoped to go back to my in-laws with the good news. However, late in the evening my wife and the midwife persuaded me to go home to rest and sleep for the baby would not come before the next morning. I did exactly as I was told. The following morning when I got up, I was greeted by my in-laws with the news that I was the father of a baby girl. Waiting for

a while to see my reaction, they then told me the baby was a boy. I rushed to the hospital as fast as I could. On the way I was stopped by many people, ^{who} ~~she~~ had heard the news even before me, wishing me well. In the hospital I was allowed to see the baby and my wife and thankful that both were doing fine.

In the ensuing days in the hospital a problem arose with the baby. He could not hold his milk. Although fed naturally by his mother and seeming to enjoy it healthily, he could not retain his intake. No sooner my wife was through feeding him than he vomited it all out. We later discovered that my wife's diet did not agree with him. Eight days later we had a small feast celebrating the circumcision of the baby. After the baby was born my wife and baby did not return to Munich. She stayed with the baby in the villa where her sisters lived, occupying one room on the second floor. We retained our apartment in Munich and I commuted daily between Munich and Feldafing. This went on for a little while for we were undecided whether to take the baby to Munich or settle in Feldafing. One thing, however, became apparent, that we could not stay cramped in the small room on the second floor we now occupied. Finally, bearing in mind that we intended to immigrate to Palestine and feeling that being a member of a D.P. camp would facilitate this, we decided to apply for larger lodgings from the Feldafing camp administration. With the influx of D.P.s from Eastern Europe for eventual immigration to Palestine taking up every possible space, it took quite some doing before we finally were assigned an apartment in downtown Feldafing where we lived until we left Germany. Eventually, we found no need for the apartment in Munich and we gave that up.

This was the time when Jews immigrated legally to very few places. This was also the time when the political fervor, as far as we were concerned, was at its highest peak. Jews were sailing to Palestine illegally, on everything

they could get their hands on, culminating with the "Exodus". On some occasions the British sent the D.P.s back to Germany. But later, because of the public outcry, set up camps in Cyprus where those who were caught were detained. The "Exodus", which was denied entry into Palestine, was likewise forced to sail back to Germany. This incident was well-publicized and highly dramatized. In Palestine itself, the Jewish underground put a great deal of pressure on the mandate government. An Anglo-American commission under the auspices of the United Nations was established to investigate the problem of Jewish D.P. camps and settlement in Palestine and recommend a solution to the Arab-Jewish strife in Palestine. The Arabs, supported by the British, were for denial of Jewish rights on Palestine. After several months of on-the-spot investigation in Palestine and in the Jewish D.P. camps in Germany and Austria, the commission recommended the partition of Palestine into an Arab and Jewish state. England, faced with opposition to its policies in Palestine by people of good will everywhere, including England, facing the soaring difficulties of keeping Palestine an armed camp plus her post-war difficulties at home, requested the United Nations to consider a solution to the Palestine problem and announced termination of her mandate over Palestine by May, 1948. The United Nations, therefore, had no choice but to act and we for whom the wheels finally began to move saw some light.

• There was a great deal of work to be done to achieve legal sanction for a Jewish state. The U.N. membership was far from unanimous for such a state and the Arab nations were not sitting idly by. They threatened war and promised to drown the state in blood before it was even born. Failing this, they threatened to drive the Jews into the Mediterranean. I followed these events very closely and although I was not active in a personal way, I rejoiced with

every hopeful pronouncement and every little success in favor of our cause and suffered with every setback.

Within myself was fought an internal battle. For I was constantly torn between my undying loyalty to the principle of a Jewish homeland in Palestine and the promotion of it on the one hand, and my present job of helping facilitate the immigration of Jews to the United States. Justification was not easy to come by. I had never hindered anybody from attempting to immigrate to the U.S. Neither did I refrain from using my influence when I thought it helpful in changing some minds. Whenever I was successful in helping somebody change direction, I felt justified in my job. At times, when the flow of people through the office was unusually great, I felt depressed even to the point of considering resigning from the job. Yet I needed the job now, more than ever before. Time, it seemed to me, was in a conspiracy with our enemies, thinning the ranks of emigrants to Palestine. For if, after the war, we had the opportunity to go to Palestine, with a few exceptions, nobody would have desired to go elsewhere. Thus, despite my torment, sometimes feeling fully justified, other times not so sure, I liked my job, excelled in it, and gained the respect of many people.

The summer of 1947 was a time of great activity in the Jewish camp. Young single men were being recruited to be shipped to Palestine to join in the battle for independence, which seemed to have become inevitable. There was not a single day that the Palestine question and the Jewish D.P.s were not the subject of the headlines. In September, the U.N. General Assembly met to consider and vote on the recommendation that Palestine be divided into a Jewish and Arab State. In November, 1947, after long deliberations and with the support of the U.S. and Soviet Union, the U.N. General Assembly, with a two-third majority, came down with a historic decision and approved the partition of Palestine.

Thus, after almost two thousand years of exile, the U.N. gave legal sanction to a Jewish state in the ancient land of Israel and for the return of the much-tormented people to its homeland. Wherever Jews lived in the world, the joy over the U.N.'s decision was unprecedented and the Feldafing D.P. camp was no exception. There were celebrations and meetings to mark the occasion. There were also sobering thoughts and the realization that there was a long way from a decision ⁱⁿ ~~to~~ Lake Success to actual implementation. The U.N. had no machinery to enforce its decisions nor did the member states care to lift a finger to help the Jews establish their state. Indeed, no sooner had the resolution passed the General Assembly, than there were behind-the-scenes efforts by some states to have a U.N. Trusteeship take over the mandate when Great Britain was scheduled to relinquish it on May 15, 1948. The Jewish community in the world became quickly aware that it must mobilize all its resources and be prepared for great sacrifices lest the legal sanction for the Jewish state become worthless. The Jewish people rose to the challenge. In Palestine, the Jewish community, against enormous odds, for the mandatory power cooperated with the Arabs to prevent the establishment of a Jewish state, prepared the machinery for an orderly transition to power once the British had left.

Fighting between the Arabs and Jews, which had continued sporadically, was intensified and a dire need for military equipment, ammunition and guns was felt. An S.O.S. for this equipment went out to Jews and the friends of Jews all over the world. All this had to be obtained and paid for dearly and illegally and then shipped to Palestine by the underground. Likewise, volunteers to help in the fight still had to be shipped into Palestine illegally. The British put obstacles in every way possible to stifle the Jews from taking over even in the parts of Palestine allocated to them. Whenever the British

military abandoned a position, they turned it over to the Arabs, leaving behind ammunition and military equipment. In spite of this partiality, the Jewish Haganah fought and secured many strategic positions from the Arabs, even prior to the actual independence.

American Jews, after the Holocaust, the largest Jewish community in the world, were in the forefront in giving of their means, in mobilizing public opinions and petitioning their government not to stray from the support of the cause of a Jewish state in Palestine. During the winter of 1948, amid the threats of the Arab states and the heavy fighting in Palestine, and in spite of Jewish determination, the State Department began officially to move away from the Partition plan. So much so that, when the date of May 15 was a week or two away, and it was absolutely sure that the British meant to live up to their promise to leave Palestine by that date, the Jewish Agency was counseled not to proclaim the state. But nothing was to deter Ben Gurion, who was the head of the Jewish Agency and the Jewish people in Palestine, from the determination to proclaim the state. It must be now or it may never be, was the contention.

And so, because April 15, 1948, fell on the Sabbath, Mr. Ben Gurion, in the presence of the members of the Jewish agency, proclaimed the establishment of the State of Israel, and its independence on April 14, 1948, in a historic ceremony in Tel Aviv. Thus, after almost two thousand years, the Jewish state was recreated. Mr. Ben Gurion, in his independence proclamation, pledged freedom for all citizens of the new State, Arab and Jew alike. The world took the news, like anything else pertaining to Jews, with indifference. The State Department was shocked, and even more dismayed when, a few minutes after the proclamation was made public, President Truman gave U.S. de facto recognition to the new Jewish state. The Jewish survivors of the Holocaust

and the Jews of the world in general gave a sigh of relief after hearing the news. For, over the past few months, they had harbored many doubts whether this great historic event would come to pass as scheduled. Jews were now free to immigrate to Israel if they so wished. Thus the movement of D.P.s to Israel began in earnest. Also, the war of independence for Israel became much intensified, for seven Arab countries, with regular armies, invaded the country and declared war on the newly-born state. Saturday, April 15, 1948, like any other Saturday, I did not travel to Munich for I did not work that day. I got up in the morning and, after breakfast, I took my youngster, who was ten months old, in his baby carriage for a walk to the terminal station in Feldafing. At the station the Stars and Stripes, the U.S. military newspaper, and other English language newspapers screamed out the headline: "New State of Israel Born Amid War". And, under the story, a picture of a formation of a voluntary military unit, "Haganah", which was the nucleus of the Israeli army, marching towards battle.

I had tears in my eyes. The Jewish D.P.s at the station I met and engaged in conversation on the subject were, like myself, overjoyed over the events but, at the same time, very much concerned over the fate of the Jewish state in the face of the military invasions. From the station I went to the camp because I wanted to be as close to the latest developments and news as possible. The mood in the camp was both joyous and somber. Young men and women were leaving Israel to join the battle, for the first time, openly and freely. Preparations were under way to bring all the Jews detained by the British in Cyprus camps, to Israel as far as possible. It was reported that the first boat with refugees had already anchored in Haifa and had officially been received by officials of the provisional Israeli government and by crowds of Israelis. The scene was described as a heartbreaking drama with a happy

ending. Before the day was over the Feldafing camp had had a few quiet celebrations and many prayers for the welfare of Israel. The real test of Israel's capacity to defend herself and endure was at hand. We knew it and therefore watched the developments with anxiety, hope, and confidence. It was several weeks before the crisis was over and Israel emerged victorious. The Arabs agreed to a truce which later led to armistice agreements. Israel was indeed here to stay. At last the hope, dreams and prayers of generations of Jews for two thousand years was fulfilled. Jews anywhere were no longer a people without a country.

Six million Jews, including my parents and loved ones, unfortunately were not privileged to enjoy this glorious moment in our history. The following day when I arrived at work in Munich, the atmosphere in the office was likewise exhilarating. The immediate effect was a sudden drop in interest of many to immigrate to various countries except Israel. The lines were now long in the adjoining building where the Central Committee of the Jews in Germany was located. People were registering for Israel and obtaining temporary Jewish Agency passports for the trip. By no means did I feel bad about the existing situation, nor did the drop of registration for America continue very long.

In the middle of 1948, my stomach ailment took a turn for the worst and the Jewish doctor in Freiman whom I had befriended and who had tried to treat me with his secret formula, advised me to go to the hospital for observation. Since he was on the staff of the D.P. hospital in Schwabing, Munich, I was admitted there. After ten days there with no results and no improvement, I went to a German Professor in Munich. After several consultations with him and a strict diet and again no improvement, I consented to the German doctors' urgings that I enter his private clinic in Tutzing, Germany,

which was not very far from Feldafing, for treatment. I stayed there for two weeks and again the results of the tests were negative except for a very persistent gastric condition. When I left the clinic the doctor insisted that I stay on, but since I had had an unusual loss of weight during my stay there, my wife agreed that I go home. I stayed home another week or ten days, during which time my wife took special care of me, building me up and helping me regain strength. When I returned to work I registered to go to Israel and my wife and I began to acquire things that we wanted to take along to Israel. In the meantime, one of my brothers-in-law, whose single brother and sister had left for Israel as soon as the state had been proclaimed, and she had registered to follow them shortly thereafter, received instructions for departure. He and his wife and little son bid us good-bye, wishing us to be reunited soon. They were the first in our immediate family to leave Germany for Israel. Soon, however, my second brother-in-law, with my wife's older sister and son, also packed up and followed them to Israel. The reason that we stayed on was for me to recuperate and gain more strength. My wife's youngest sister, who was now married too, and who had recently given birth to a baby boy, was still in Feldafing. In 1948, after the Jewish state had been established, there became visible a much-increased movement of Jewish D.P.s from Germany and Austria, to Israel mainly, but also to the United States, Canada, South America, and Australia. However, despite this movement, the camps and the Jewish communities in Germany did not seem to shrink. This was due to the constant influx of surviving Jews from Eastern Europe. Neither did the social and political activities diminish. If anything, 1948 was a peak year for these activities and remained so up to my departure in April of 1949 and possibly much longer thereafter. After my registration for Israel, I kept on working at the HIAS as head of the American desk. My thoughts, however, were

frequent as to how to best prepare myself and my family for the trip and resettlement and, although I was prepared to do almost any work to benefit my family and help build the Jewish State, I hoped to find work in the administrative field, where I knew I could best fit in. And then like a bomb shell, a letter from my in-laws in Israel came, depicting their hardships there.

Despite the efforts of the government and the massive influx of immigrants, they were living in tents under very tough conditions. Jobs were few and far between and only in construction, when available. Considering my physical condition, the letter continued, I should, at least for the present, give up the idea of coming to Israel and instead, attempt immigration to the United States.

At first this came to me as a shock and I did not want to hear about it. But, after many discussions with my wife, I started to give it some thought. I felt terrible just thinking about changing course. I felt like a traitor giving up on my own ideas. I sought out the advice of many people. I discussed the matter with my supervisor, the director of HIAS. Finally, after a lot of soul searching and agonizing, I decided to take the fateful step and register for the United States. I came to the conclusion that I owed my wife and child the opportunity of a life free of hardships, wherever I could best provide it. I also felt that, by going to America, my options were still open to move to Israel at a later time. A very important factor in my decision was the fact that I was not sure that, in my present condition, that I would not become a burden rather than an asset to the Jewish state. After my registration in late 1948, for immigration to America, and the help that I expected from the director of HIAS and the American Consul in Munich, it was only a matter of time before I, my wife and child, would be departing for the

United States. A procedural process began for me and my wife almost immediately after registration. The processing took several months to complete.

We were first called for a thorough investigation by the C.I.C. They delved into every facet of our lives, our past record and our political ideologies. Then came a number of medical examinations, physical as well as mental. At each step of the process, a number of documents proving one thing or another had to be submitted. Prospective immigrants waited for hours for those examinations, hoping not to be rejected. After years in concentration camps, many did carry physical scars which they hoped would not prevent them from being admitted to the United States. During those hours of waiting there were friendly conversations among the people and an exchange of information on how best to impress the interviewers. Nevertheless, at every step of the process, there always were a number of rejections and a lot of heartbreak when it happened. We, however, did not encounter any difficulties, and indeed, expecting to leave soon, began to dispose of things that we could not or would not take along with us. Likewise, I began to wind down my activities at my job at HIAS while another man was being broken in to take my post.

In March of 1949, after the formality of an interview with the American Consul in Munich, I received instructions to report with my family and baggage to a camp in Munich for final processing prior to departure for Bremen. At that time we were already sitting on our bags in Feldafing, expecting to be called. We bid our neighbors in Feldafing good-bye and my youngest sister-in-law, who had also registered for America, accompanied us to the processing camp in Munich. On the way there there was very little said for my thoughts were all to myself, filled with hope and doubt. Again I questioned the correctness of my decision, a problem that bothered me even as I boarded the train for Bremen and one I did not dispel until I had settled in Cincinnati.

At the processing center they cleared our papers and assigned us temporary quarters for the duration of our stay. My wife's sister helped us get situated, stayed with us for a while, and then departed. We were convinced that once we had come this far that we wouldn't have to spend too much time here. There were, however, instances in which people were hung up for weeks here before given approval for departure. For the next few days we were again subject to thorough questioning and examinations and, as in the past, given a clear bill of health. Relieved now of the daily trips to the different offices, we settled down to wait for the next transport to Bremen and the last and final process prior to embarkation for America.

By the end of March we were on our way to Bremen. A couple days before the actual departure too, place we were alerted to have everything packed and ready. On the day of departure we got up early in the morning but it was late in the afternoon when the army trucks arrived. Again the names were called, our baggage checked in, and finally we too, situated on the truck, ready to leave. It was a cold March day and the trucks were enclosed from the top with tarpaulians to shield us from the wind. Yet nobody complained about the cold. When the trucks started to move, those who hoped soon to follow in our footsteps bid us farewell. We were glad to have this phase of the long process completed. The trucks made their way through the camp towards the gate. With the formalities at the gate over, I took a last glimpse at the camp as the trucks drove away, picking up speed as we passed the streets of Munich for the last time, towards the Munich Bahnhof.

It was almost dark before we were all on board the train. Shortly thereafter a blast from the engine put the train in motion and the sound of the wheels of the cars pressing the tracks cushioned under the railroad bed, mixed with an occasional whistle from the engine made beautiful music to our ears.

The evening gave way to the deep night. I was tightly pressed in on the berth of my compartment despite my being stretched out and taking up more space than most people. I was napping and reliving my life's events. When I woke up my stomach discomforts had disappeared. Instead, I had a splitting headache. My wife quickly remedied that situation for she had equipped herself with a number of pills for the journey. The baby was sleeping and she told me that I too had had a healthy nap. I proceeded to tell her that it had not been so healthy for I had had my whole life pass me again in a dream.

As I looked out the window of the train the day was already beginning to break and I knew that it would not be much longer before we arrived in Bremen. As I looked out the window of the train, I could now see the farmhouses, farms and villages, that we were passing. Slowly came the light of the day, in spite of the cloudiness of the sky, allowing the sun occasionally to appear from behind the clouds. Then the countryside gave way when, on the horizon, there began to appear sketches of high rises and buildings that became bigger with every passing mile. As we approached the city of Bremen what had looked from far like a beautiful panorama, in its nakedness turned out to be tall skeletons of bombed out buildings.

In the compartments of the train the stillness of the night gave way to quiet conversation and the frantic movement and preparation of the passengers to disembark. The air was filled with expectation when the train came to a stop at the Bremen Bahnhof. The UNRRA trucks were already waiting to take us to the U.S. Immigration Center for final processing. Again we were assigned quarters, several families to one big room. Actually, the only thing we were given were military beds. During the day, unless called for interviews with the processing authorities, we could do as we saw fit.

On cold days, most of us stayed in, sitting on our cots, playing games, discussing events, etc. Three times a day, in order to receive our rations, we had to go to the camp kitchen. Although there was a mess hall where one could eat, most preferred to take it to their quarters. The bread was exceptionally good here, but even the soups and the rest of the food dispensed, considering the institutional cooking, was not too bad. Many took advantage of the stay in Bremen to travel downtown to sightsee or to acquire one more item before departure.

The average stay was about two weeks but for some it was much longer, owing to unexpected obstacles and legal delays. In contrast to the Munich camp, my arrival in Bremen had suddenly improved my physical well being. Whether it was the scenery, the air, or whatever, I began to feel very good, becoming cheerful and happy. My wife, despite the crowded conditions, did not mind even if we had to stay somewhat longer, because of my improvement. This, however, changed towards the end of our stay in the Bremen camp when our baby developed an inner ear infection. Our first appearance before a U.S. immigration officer in the camp took place on the third day of our arrival. As in the past, we had to wait our turn to be admitted. The interview was lengthy, with a precise examination of each document in our dossier that had accumulated since our original application. Again, all the familiar questions were asked, the answers to which we already knew by heart and gave automatically. Several days later we were called again to appear before the Consul. After a very brief and friendly discussion, he signed our papers, authorizing our entry into the U.S. for permanent residence and prospective citizenship. He advised that we would be leaving, about the fifteenth of the month, and wished us good fortune in our new homeland.

Thus the long process in our efforts to gain admittance into the U.S. was finally successfully concluded. Our joy of having passed another hurdle in our lives and the expectation of becoming Americans, was one of our greatest triumphs next to being liberated and having survived the concentration camps. We did not celebrate the occasion formally, but within our hearts there was a renewal of great hope and a resurgence of dreams yet to come true.

My young wife, looking back into her past and our relative short turbulent time together, looked upon this as a new turning point in our lives and all for the better. Although I was hopeful that she was right in her assessment, and mindful that my bout with my stomach problems were not completely over, I did have some apprehension. But I was not about to reveal it to her, especially at this time, while I saw the glow in her eyes mixed with tears. We spent the rest of the day sharing our happiness with those in our room who likewise had had the good fortune of having had their process for immigration completed successfully. Likewise, we reassured those who had yet to receive their final approval. According to schedule, we still had almost a week before departure. One day we did leave the camp and went to town, but then my little boy developed an ear infection which kept us constantly with him. The poor child suffered immensely, and because of the limited medical facilities, there was not much we could do. With the limited medication we hoped that the ear infection would subside before departure.

About three days before departure, I was asked, because of my command of English, if I would consent to be the ship leader for the immigrants. This necessitated my leaving the camp for the ship a day ahead of the general boarding of the ship, which also meant leaving my wife and baby behind for a day. Since I was feeling fine and in good spirits, I had a desire to assume this leadership.

But I was not ready to accept without my wife's consent. My wife, sensing my desire, did not even wait for my asking but encouraged me to be the leader. As far as the baby was concerned, she said she was quite capable of taking care of the baby by herself. Thus, on April 15, 1949, I and a small group of others selected to help me and do some liaison work on the ship, bid our loved ones good-bye, left the processing camp and drove to Bremenhaven to the harbour, where the boat that would take us to America was docked. The ship was an army boat and was called "General Langfitt". When we arrived in the harbour, we passed up other military vessels that were likewise docked and taking on military personnel returning to the States.

The sight was one which was very new to me for I had never been in a harbour nor had I ever been on a ship. The vessel stood, majestically waiting for its cargo, as if proud of its achievement in war and peace. We climbed up the stairs of the dock and filed onto the ship one by one, being greeted by officers and crew. After being assigned our quarters on the bottom deck, we were assembled on the main deck of the ship and given an orientation lesson. We were guided through the ship and assigned duties for the day when the general embarkment would take place and informed about our functions once the ship was in motion.

My duties were mainly liaison and coordination. The first night on the ship was a quiet one indeed. Although we tried to stay together, all of us early arrivals, were too curious not to delve into every compartment of the vessel. That is not to say that the ship was enormously big, but with only a few people, it seemed larger than it actually was. The quietness was rapidly changed the following morning when the ship became a beehive of activity. Women were separated from their husbands, for all were assigned quarters on

bunk beds in commonly-shared large cabins of the ships, used for the transport of soldiers. Only women with children were assigned separate cabins or cabins shared with only one woman. My wife and baby were assigned a cabin which they shared with a single lady. My baby was still suffering from his ear discomfort and we hoped to have the ship doctor examine his ears as soon as possible.

As soon as everybody on the ship was situated they became, for the next ten days, one big family. It is amazing how people put together, sharing the same hopes and aspirations, respond positively to one another. The immigrants were people of all faiths, of different backgrounds and all ages, yet they acted in a fashion that would make the world into a paradise could this atmosphere permeate the peoples of the world. Of course, the voyage we were about to undertake was joyous for everybody, full of excitement and expectation. While the people were helping one another to make the trip as comfortable as possible, and while I was running around taking orders and relaying them to the passengers and my fellow helpers, the crew of the ship was preparing for departure. Several hours after the boarding of the ship was completed, the ship began moving into the open sea.

It was a chilly day, yet many passengers moved out on the open deck to watch the vessel moving. It started slowly, but as the ship moved farther away from the shore, it began to pick up speed. When the ship was at full speed more and more people became sea sick. Some were so sick that they could not eat and vomitted. After the first day at sea I too became so sick that I could not function and spent most of the time on my bunk. There were three meals a day served but one had to go to the mess hall in order to eat. The food was delicious and abundant but many could not make it to the mess hall, nor did they have an appetite for food. On the second day, in the afternoon,

we entered the English Channel. The weather was mild, the sun was shining, and the distant shores presented a beautiful panorama. Most of the passengers, although sick, flocked to the open deck in order not to miss the beauty of the area. Once we passed the channel and entered the Atlantic the vessel really took off, and for the next eight days, we saw nothing except the skies and water. Occasionally, another ship was seen in the distance. On the second day, the doctor in attendance examined my son's ears. He said that the worst was over, but he cautioned us to have him thoroughly checked soon after arrival in the States. My wife was not as badly affected by the sea as I was. Thus, she was quite often at my bunk, apprising me of everything that was taking place. There were several days when there were intermittent rains, at times very heavy, and the ocean very stormy. Except for the crew, nobody dared to walk and in the mess hall, the calls for meals went unheeded. Most of the time, however, the sea was relatively calm.

On April 26th, about two o'clock in the morning, the darkness of the night was infiltrated by the first lights from the distance. As the ship kept moving on, the lights became stronger and the New York shore began to appear. The vessel cut its speed and moved at a slower pace. Now the lights illuminated all the big skyscrapers of New York. Practically all the people were on the open deck of the ship, for the sight was so spectacular that nobody wanted to miss it. Also, nobody wanted to miss the ship's entrance into the harbour. Instead, however, the ship continued at a slow pace, slowing down to a mere walk, and finally, stopped completely. As the vessel stopped, the sea sickness which afflicted us disappeared likewise. Inquiries for the reason of the ship's halt was explained that clearance from the shore authority must be received for entry into the harbour and the availability of a pier, that we should not be able to dock before the morning. Thus, before daybreak, many

kept enjoying the sight, while others packed to be ready to disembark.

My little boy was soundly asleep so I and my wife, feeling good, took the opportunity to get onto the main deck, walked over to the rail, stared into the water, then stared romantically at each other, looked at the beautiful illuminating light from the New York skyline breaking the deep darkness of the night, and just being speechless. But the speechlessness was such which conveyed a message, saying, in effect, "here we are, we made it." But, after a while, we both, as if it had been prearranged, popped the question. What now? What does the future hold for us? Of course, at that moment, we were full of hopes, expectations and happiness. We stayed there for a few minutes, then, holding hands, we walked around the deck, trying to get a glimpse at the surroundings. We went down to the cabin to check on the baby. In spite of the commotion he was still soundly asleep and we did not dare wake him. When we returned to the deck daylight was slowly breaking and the lights that had been so illuminated in the darkness, began to pale with every minute. About eight in the morning, immigration officers in small boats pulled up toward the ship. They came aboard for the preliminary processing of the new immigrants. At about ten o'clock in the morning the ship started to move slowly again. Shortly thereafter, we finally docked in the New York harbour, greeted by a throng of people waiting on the shore, waving to us. Apparently, there were some on the ship who had relatives waiting for them. We, unfortunately, did not expect any relatives waiting for us. But our faith in our destiny and in our fellow Jews was stronger than ever. Soon we would take our first step in the Land of our Dreams.

Personal Remarks

Many years have now passed since the Second World War and the destruction of one third of world Jewry. Time the expectant provider of a healing process and hindsight a better understanding is not completely true here. The questions and mysteries surrounding the holocaust the day after are as relevant today as they were then. That is not to say that attempts were not made and some explanations given. Personally, I cannot say that I am satisfied, after many years of searching and analyzing the period, time and again, that I have found the answers to the many whys. Apparently the reason for the holocaust will remain a mystery for a long time if not forever.

In my many apperances before people on the subject of the holocaust the recurring questions asked are: Why did the Nazis pick on the Jews? Why did the vast majority of the Jews submit to the slaughter like sheep? Why was the world indifferent? I have tried to deal with these questions and answer them to the best of my knowledge, ability and belief. Indeed, I could say with certainty how I personally felt and reacted to any given situation and action of the Germans. And because of the instinctknowledge of my people also share their feelings. But what made our tormentors and the world around us do what they did has been and still is bothersome to me. Of course that is not to say that I have no educated guesses as to why they acted as they did.

Why then did the Nazis pick on the Jews? Simply the Jews were there and a convenient scapegoat for all the ills of post World War I Germany. Indeed, there really was nothing new in this. For almost two thousand years Jews living in Europe were blamed for every misfortune and every problem, in their respective countries, whether imagined or real, from economics to politics. It all really started with the Church whan the Jews defied her efforts of conversion. In retaliation the Church accused the Jews of killing Christ and as a result of this teaching, bias, pręjudice and hate followed. The Jew was seen as a pariah and with the encouragement of the Church it was

not long before the Jew not only suffered indignities, discrimination and persecution but mob violence eruptions, which turned into massacres and pogroms. Thus, over the centuries Europe was infected with the disease of antisemitism which became ingrained very deeply and prevalent in every facet of life. Even when relations between Gentile and Jew seemed cordial they were in most cases superficial. The Nazis thus found fertile ground to be exploited.

Now why did we not offer massive armed resistance in the face of this destruction. Here too the answers are not simple. But it has to do with the mentality of the Jew which evolved over the past two thousand years in the diaspora. Basically, the strong faith, the belief of salvation and eventual return to the land of his ancestors, Israel, was not conducive to violence. Moreover, being a minority, limited in numbers, under constant pressure and persecution, the Jew of Europe was resigned to passive resistance, ready to sacrifice the few in order to preserve the majority. This attitude began to undergo a drastic change with my generation, but the process was too slow to have made any impact when Hitler invaded Europe. The Nazis studied their victims and therefore never closed the door and never precluded the hope for survival. In effect, the Nazis lied, cheated and promised the victim survival for the price of obedience, thus giving credence to what the victim wanted to believe. In the end the victim was totally disorganized, physically and mentally exhausted to care, resigned to his fate and in many instances welcoming death as relief.

And now what about the world, the western democracies, why didn't they react forcefully at the first sign of the impending holocaust but instead with their negative actions practically gave Hitler a free hand. I truly believe that here the saying that "you reap what you sow" is fully applicable. No country and no individual ever was or is completely immune of the infectious disease of antisemitism and hate. Two thousand years of such teachings leave its mark and cannot be easily eradicated. It is much easier to infect than to cure. The world in general and the Allies in particular were hemming and hoeing

unable to resolve its inner conflict. On the one hand conscience crying out for action and on the other prejudice withholding it. Of course political considerations were also about but none seemingly favorable to the Jews. On a more personal level, in the places where the drama unfolded, the vast majority of non Jews were indeed not reluctant to take the opportunity to partake in the spoils.

There were nonetheless those who at the risk of their own lives actively helped Jews. That they acted in spite of the general atmosphere make their deeds even more courageous and more exeplyifying. These were truly heroes of their day and human beings in the finest sense of the word. They saved the conscience of the world.

Why did I survive was a nagging question to me and I suppose to many survivors for a long time. Surely I did not do anything extraordinary to persevere. I did try to cling to life and at times even doggedly but nothing did I do to alter or change drastically the turn of my personal events. My survival I ascribe to sheer luck and this is true of most of the survivors of the concentration camps.

There were nevertheless many acts of heroic resistance and uprisings in ghettos and concentration camps. They came, however too late, out of frustration, to save the honor of the Jews rather than to be of any meaningful help.

In retrospect, would I have changed anything to ease my suffering or affect my liberation sooner? I firmly believe that Had I remained with the last shift in Rakow, hidden, rather than return to the barracks I would have avoided the experience of the Buchenwald concentration camp.

And now what about the survivors today? Have the years been kind to them Are they still in torment or living in relative peace? Indeed, the years took their tollbut those who are still around outwardly look and act asany normal people. They brought up families and yes most became successful in their daily endeavors, some even became very wealthy. But scratch the surface and the experiences of the holocaust are as potent as they were the day after.

Inevitably any conversation among survivors or where a survivor is present, on any subject, eventually must touch on the holocaust. Unconsciously the survivor lives and breathes his past, in sadness and in his joy, so much so that his offspring has become affected by it. And occasionally the tranquility of the night is disturbed by a nightmare reliving the past. Generally, however, he is capable of coping with any situation and is determined to drink from the cup of life to the fullest.

And finally is a holocaust possible today? It is my opinion that as far as the Jews are concerned a catastrophe like the holocaust is very unlikely in the foreseeable future. My opinion is not based on the lack of hostile forces to the Jews in almost every society in the world to foment such a disaster, but rather on the fact that a lesson was learned and vigilance is constant to keep these forces at bay. Israel's existence is also a factor negating a holocaust. as far as the world is concerned there have been several mass murders since the 2nd World War, in Africa, and there is one going on right now in Cambodia and not to many people in the world are aware of it. Yes as long as people do not learn from the past, are ignorant of the present and do not mobilize to move in a concerted effort against hate, prejudice and political expediency there will be holocausts in this world.

I hope that by describing my experiences during the holocaust, I helped if only in a small way, to give the lie to the many Jew haters, who now pretend that the holocaust never happened. Further I fervently hope with all my heart and soul that in my primitive way and if only in a small measure I have contributed to the consciousness of future generations to the evil of antisemitism and hate and thus the hope for a better world.

Ray Kantor

December 1979

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